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THE

VALE OF THE TOWEY.

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TRAITS AND STORIES

OF THE

WELSH PEASANTRY.

BY ANNE BEALE.

"Therefore, although it be a history,
Homely and rude, I will relate the same,
For the delight of a few natural hearts."

Wordsworth's Michael.

London:

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & CO., SOHO SQUARE.

1849.

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JOSEPH CHARLES KING, ESQ.

This Volume

IS INSCRIBED, WITH HIGH ESTEEM AND REGARD,

BY

HIS VERY SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

I FEAR the majority of those who may open this volume will expect to find in its pages some record of the agrarian excitement which lately spread itself through South Wales, and in which the "Vale of the Towey" largely participated; and that they will, consequently, look for descriptions of stirring events, and portraitures of a people of determined, if not of a turbulent and rebellious, character. Their anticipations will be, however, disappointed, for these sketches were imagined, and, indeed, nearly completed, before our tranquil vales and mountains witnessed the outbreaks of a disease which, I hope, is now cured, and became scenes of civil warfare and midnight violence.

When I came hither, a stranger, I was struck by the loveliness of the country, as well as by the character, manners, and language of its primitive

inhabitants. My nearer observation brought me acquainted with many traditional observances, many general usages, and many national peculiarities, which appeared to me novel and entertaining. In the small compass of this beautiful valley I had a world completely closed in from the outer world, in which I soon became deeply interested, and I began to attempt sketches of scenery, and simple annals of simple folk, as they, from time to time, drew my admiration, or excited my fancy.

In bringing these before the public, I neither expect them to attract great attention, nor to obtain general perusal. They are no highly-coloured paintings, wrought up to the taste of the time — no tales of breathless interest — no whimsical or burlesque delineations of character; they are simply attempts at portraying persons and things truthfully as they exist, and if my art has not enabled me to bring them out as strongly as I could have wished, I have not, consciously, overcharged or distorted them.

There are many, I know, amongst us, who love the country for its own sake, and who enjoy rural scenes and pleasures for their freedom from the deception and false glitter too frequently the attendant of more refined and cultivated life. There are many who delight to fly from the noise and bustle of the world to regions of seclusion and peace, where they can look upon Nature as she came fresh from the

hand of her Maker, and find in her children something of their original simplicity and purity.

By such, I hope, these sketches may not be totally disregarded, and to such I venture to offer them, feeling conscious, the while, that I am adding no fresh evergreen to the well-stored gardens of literature, but am simply planting an annual, which may perish as soon as set, or which, at best, may live out its little season, and then fall, like thousands of similar frail productions, into forgetfulness and decay.

ANNE BEALE.

Llwynhelig, Llandilo,
1844.

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THE VALE OF THE TOWEY;

OR,

SKETCHES IN SOUTH WALES.

No. I.

AN INTRODUCTION TO WALES.

WHO that has friends, and has been separated from them, can fail to remember the utter sinking of heart which oppressed him when he set out upon the journey that was to divide him and them for any considerable length of time, and to bear him amongst new scenes and new faces? Who is there that cannot recall the parting kiss, the warm pressure of the hand, and the solemnly affecting "God bless you," which accompanied him, when, with a heart too full for utterance, he looked farewell on the friends he loved? Or who can forget the painful, tearful reverie into which he sank when those friends were no longer to be seen, and he began to fancy himself alone in the

world? If there are few who have not experienced feelings something akin to these, there must be also few who have not been almost angry with themselves for allowing new scenes and events, for a while at least, to supersede them; whilst, at the same time, they became conscious of the power that external nature possesses over the inward mind, by soothing or invigorating it until sorrow forgets itself in the very air it breathes.

It matters not how far I had travelled, after parting — it might be for any number of years — with dear and long-tried friends, before I began to feel the force of this, and to acknowledge that nothing more easily dissipates melancholy than a drive through a line of country you have never before traversed. It is enough for me to say that I was going into Wales for the first time, and that the novelty and beauty of the scenery, together with the pure mountain air, dispelled whatever feelings of sadness had seized upon me, and enabled me fully to enjoy the different prospects that opened before me as we proceeded.

I leave the beautiful Wye, with its rocks, woods, and castles, behind me—for I have nothing now to do with England—and enter at once upon Wales. Certainly it is a lovely country, I thought, as we passed through every diversity of home scenery. In the green vallies, rich in pasturage, the native black cattle and far-famed Welsh sheep were feeding, whilst they dotted the mountain side, also, with black and white. How spring-like and delightful looked the bright green hedges, interspersed with the white flowers of

the hawthorn! Fine trees grew on every side, particularly the magnificent oak, which, as he uplifted his monarch head, seemed to speak of Britain's pride. Smaller trees and underwood covered the hills, from which the white-washed cottage — *really* white-washed roof and walls — occasionally peeped, and smiled as its dark veil was partially withdrawn. At every opening appeared the distant mountains, meeting the clouds, and seeming to invite the fugitives to tarry with them, but in vain, since they flew off in every direction, leaving the mountains in their grandeur, distinct from, yet apparently touching, the very sky itself.

There was a road running between two high hills, the declination of which was so trifling as to make them appear perpendicular. They formed a deep defile; and the short turf and wild flowers with which they were covered seemed giving an invitation to a scramble, whilst their summits promised a view that should compensate for much loss of breath and fatigue of limb. As we left these wild hills behind us, bright blue sunny mountains appeared; and I felt, or fancied I felt, increased buoyancy in the air, probably from our vicinity to the highest mountains in South Wales — those of Brecknockshire.

Stags appear to have very long necks to those who have never seen a giraffe; and although the Brecknockshire Beacons are, compared with Snowdon and Plinlimmon, what Snowdon and Plinlimmon are when compared with Mont Blanc and St. Gothard, they burst upon me as the grandest, or among the

grandest, works of creation I had ever beheld. As they stood distinctly forth in the clear sunshine, they were, to my inexperienced eyes, sublimely grand, and fitted to elevate the mind to high and noble thoughts of the great Being who had fixed them in their time-holden seats.

A little incident was narrated to me connected with these Beacons, which it may not be out of place to introduce here.

It was just such a bright and beautiful day as that on which I was travelling, when a party set out on an expedition up one of the Beacons. They belonged to the middle class of society, and their object was pleasure. They began their ascent with the intention of getting to the highest point of the mountain as speedily as possible. The day was one of those clear, sunshiny ones which enliven the hearts, even of those who are most inclined to sadness, and which send a ray of comfort into the depths of gloom.

The party were light-hearted and joyous. Young and thoughtless, they looked not beyond the present moment, to enjoy which was their only object. It must have been a pretty sight to see the youths and maidens sparkling in the gayest hues of their holiday garb, as they scrambled up the mountain upon the black heather. Here was a timid girl, trembling as she placed her foot on the slippery sod, yet not wishing to accept the proffered assistance of a bold young cavalier. There was another, less fearful, determinately advancing and disdaining aid, whilst she courageously proceeded alone, ever and anon

smiling archly back at the friends who were toiling up behind her. Sometimes a merry laugh was heard at the mischance of some member of the party, as he or she receded half-a-dozen footsteps for one made in advance. Each little awkwardness and attempt at drollery called forth a laugh; for where the heart is predisposed and predetermined to gaiety, it requires not the refinement of wit to produce it.

Amongst this merry meeting were two young men who were friends, and who were both equally officious in their attentions to a very pretty, bright-eyed girl, who was one of the liveliest of the party, and appeared to be the universal favourite. There was such a mixture of good-nature and tenderness in her black eye, and such life and health in her rosy cheek, that it is no wonder that she was admired; but, as she smiled at one and jested with another, her heart seemed as free from burthen of *any* kind as the air she breathed. On they scrambled, now falling hands and knees upon the dry turf, and slipping backwards the while; now rising and struggling upward, till, panting for breath, they paused to wonder "when they should reach the top." After much exertion and merriment the top was finally gained, or at least the highest point accessible to so large a party. This is a dangerous place, inasmuch as it lies over the side of the mountain, which is there almost perpendicular. Here they rested, and spread out the provisions they had brought with them, making the rough stones or short turf their seats. Cold chickens, sandwiches, and the like, vanished

like snow before the fire, whilst the laugh, the song, and the jest, sped the hours on their way.

I directed the attention of my readers to two young men and a bright-eyed girl. Were I writing a romance, I should find much to interest many for this trio; but being no romance-maker, I must content myself with remarking, that whilst the maiden is the gayest of the gay, her two attendants are the most devoted of swains.

It is very pleasant to depict happiness in whatever garb she may be found; but, alas! how rarely she appears unattended by some unsisterly spirit, whose office it is to make a rent in her garments, and to show how unsubstantial is her form, —I mean, most especially, that happiness which exists in the mere animal enjoyment of the moment. As the mountain that smiled but a moment since in the sunshine, now frowns beneath the shadow of the cloud which passes over it, so tears and lamentations take place of the gay laugh and jest of the merry mountain party.

Why do the two young men, seemingly half in jest and half in earnest, utter bantering words of unkindness; and why is the young girl's face pale with anxiety? It is but a few moments ago that they were pledging each other in the wine-cup, and drinking, perhaps, alas! too freely of its maddening contents. It is but a few moments ago that many an empty bottle was seen rolling with immense velocity down the steep, and breaking, with a sharp shiver, on the side of the mountain, whilst every eye followed them, and every tongue exclaimed at the swift-

ness of their descent. A few moments ago and all was friendship and kind feeling: now all is changed. The bantering conversation of the two young men continues; but scarcely can it be known whether it is in mirth or anger. One of them rises in the warmth of his speech, and approaching the other, seizes him by the arm. The action is resented, but half good-naturedly. Gradually, however, their faces flush with anger — hard words are audible — their arms interlace — they struggle together, and near the edge of the precipice. Blindly, madly they retain their hold of each other — the poor girl for whom they thus fearfully endanger life utters a wild scream — they heed it not — the rush of their friends towards them is vain, for the foot of one is on the brink of the precipice — another moment and all is over — a thread holds the balance of life — it is snapped — the foot slips, and both are precipitated together down the steep. Even in their terrific descent they cling fast by each other — nothing arrests their fearful course — the projecting pieces of rock, and the brushwood growing from their apertures, check them not — an instant — like a flash of lightning or a falling star — and they are gone — both are hurled to eternity.

Frantic with horror the young girl rushes forward, and, but for the instant succour of her friends, would have followed her lovers down the precipice. Her eye pierces to the abyss below, where their mangled bodies are dimly visible, and she faints at the fearful spectacle. Mirth, joy, pleasure, where are ye?—like

the evening meteor, departed, leaving nothing but consternation and misery behind.

Thus perished the rivals. But the young girl, where is she? Years have passed by, and that scene has never been effaced from her memory, where it still dwells in all its vividness. Long was she bereft of reason; and when it was again restored to her she was an altered being. The sparkling beauty that had occasioned the dreadful catastrophe was faded — the joyousness of youth was gone—melancholy dwelt upon her features and in her heart: she never forgot the fatal day upon the mountains, and the miseries she had so unconsciously occasioned.

I will not longer detain my readers upon the well-frequented public road, with which many of them may be better acquainted than I am myself, but will bring them, with a hop, skip, and jump, into the secluded "Vale of the Towey," passing by, with railroad or seven-leagued boots' rapidity, the winding Usk, and the different scenes through which it flows. When I entered this little valley every thing appeared to me so novel, and withal so beautiful, that, like the rest of the race of scribblers, I could not resist putting some of the notions I formed upon paper; and hence arose the simple country sketches, which I fear will lack interest from the very circumstance of their simplicity.

There is, perhaps, nothing more desolate than to find yourself a stranger amongst strangers, when, but a few hours before, you had been the centre of many affectionate friends. When the journey is over, and

when the interest of new scenes opening before you is gone with those scenes, a craving void remains. It should, perhaps, scarcely be called *a void*, since there exist feelings of uncertainty and apprehension, which seem continually to be putting the questions — "How shall I like them? and how will they like me?"—a half dread, half hope, of you know not what. The beings of imagination fade away, and you remember that you are coming before the realities.

My speculations on the friends and acquaintances I hoped to make in Wales ended most happily. I had not expected to be at once so much "at home" as I felt myself when I arrived at my journey's end, nor had I anticipated the warmth and friendliness of manner that characterise the Welsh, who are neither distant nor cold, but easily approachable. Two Englishmen meeting for the first time, chill one another by their formal bows and salutation. There is rarely that heartiness which, almost without words, speaks a welcome, but, on the contrary, an air of inquisitiveness, which seems to say, "Who, and what are you? can one make your acquaintance?" A Welshman is unlike this. I would not accuse my countrymen of possessing less cordiality than their neighbours; but the spring from which it flows is more remote, and there is greater difficulty in getting at it: that of the Welsh, like their mountain streams, gushes out at once, and you are delighted with its freshness. They are very hospitable, moreover, and welcome you, by deeds as well as words, to their firesides.

The greatest impediment to a knowledge of such of the lower class as retain the peculiarities of race and country, exists in the difficulty of their language. Many of the cultivated Welsh know, comparatively, nothing of their native tongue, though it is absolutely essential to an acquaintance with the poor; and some, even, pride themselves on this ignorance. Strangers suppose that the pertinacity of the Welsh in not answering their questions, proceeds from obstinacy, or unwillingness to oblige; and it has been asserted that they will neither direct a traveller nor converse with him. This is not the case; the truth being that they cannot, if they would, speak English. Many, even as far south as Carmarthenshire, are as ignorant of it as of the continental languages, — nay, I believe they would understand French better, on account of the identity of many of its words with the Welsh. It is true that, since English has become universal in the higher classes, and in those of the middle ranks who come into connection with them, the Welsh language has greatly degenerated, and many words, though pronounced with a most guttural accent, are nothing but English; still, among the native peasantry, particularly those who dwell in the mountains, there are numbers who speak their fine ancient language in its original purity.

As I believe we often gather, from the simple notions of the poor, both new ideas and distinct and near views of things, I felt, at first, much vexed at the difficulty of making myself understood. There was, however, generally some one in every party of

two or three who spoke English, and acted as interpreter to those who did not; whilst others would know a few words, which they managed to employ so advantageously as to hold a short conversation with sufficient ease, and evidently with much pleasure.

My first acquaintances were a company of labourers employed in digging a pond on a gentleman's grounds, near a very pretty oak and fir wood: some were knee-deep in mud, others were wheeling away barrows full of it; but all stood still, simultaneously, at the appearance of a stranger. I asked a casual question of a little round-faced man with red cheeks, and an eye twinkling with more drollery than I can describe. He looked at his companions, shook his head, and uttered something in Welsh ending in "seisoneg," which meant "I have not much English." A tall, gaunt, upright man came to his assistance, as did one or two others, allured to a few minutes' idleness.

My friend of the twinkling eye was, I afterwards discovered, yclept Jackey Bach, or Jackey the Little, on account of the smallness of his stature; my tall friend was called "The Corporal," he having passed a great portion of his life in the army. The figures of these two men formed a striking contrast to each other, as they stood, the former leaning upon *his* spade, and the latter shouldering his like a musket. Jackey Bach was very short, and his attitude made him appear still shorter. He wore a low-crowned, broad-brimmed, oil-skin hat, under which, as I said

before, beamed a face where played the very spirit of drollery. His garments hung loosely about him, as, indeed, did those of his friend the Corporal, and both were sufficiently well patched, showing that they had "seen service." The Corporal stood as upright, with his shouldered spade, as if he had been on parade. He was nearly twice as tall as Jackey, and had a solemnity in his face almost as amusing as his friend's jocularity; and when he did condescend to smile, it was much after the manner of his touching his hat—slowly and respectfully, and as if he gave the ceremony due consideration. His face was long and thin, and he had a demure, dark eye, whilst his hat, as if to bid defiance to Jackey's, towered high in the air, with little or no brim at the base.

The conversation turned upon Wales, and Jackey appeared much pleased at my admiration of it. "It is the finest country in the world," said he; "there is no place like it."

"Oh," replied the Corporal, "*you* haven't seen foreign parts, so how should *you* know?"

"And if I had," retorted Jackey, looking aggrieved, "I shouldn't have seen anything so fine as Wales, Mr. Corporal."

Now I afterwards learnt, that of all appellations that of *Corporal* was the most disagreeable to its owner, and he was rarely called so to his face. He was not really a corporal, but had just escaped being promoted to that rank, which had greatly pained his military feelings. Jackey, also, felt his dignity as well as his height insulted by the addition of "Bach"

to his name; and whenever he wished to quarrel with the Corporal, or the Corporal with him, these distinguishing epithets were sure to be bandied about between them.

"Pooh, pooh! Jackey *Bach*," continued the Corporal, "if you had been to Spain, as I have, you'd tell a different tale. There's nothing like being sent about the world to make one know what's what, and to rub off Welsh prejudices, as my old captain used to say, who was a Welshman like myself. There's a fine country Spain is! Many's the night I have slept out of doors, without bed or bedding, in Spain, but I didn't care. I was young then, though, to be sure, I had the rheumatism, which stiffened the joints of this hand a little."

"Better stay at home and keep your joints straight," muttered Jackey; but the Corporal took no notice, and proceeded:

"I was there in the war, and got a few shots through my body,—not in my locker, as the sailors say; but I mustn't complain: seven and sixpence a week pension is a comfortable thing, added to what one can make by working. If I had been lucky enough to have been pensioned a little later, I should have had a halfpenny a week more; and I often think how nicely it would have paid for my backey."

"Humph!" grumbled Jackey, "it wouldn't have gone far towards that."

The Corporal looked contempt, and was about to proceed with his conversation, when it was interrupted by the appearance of a very pretty girl, who

told Jackey that the cows of a neighbouring farmer had broken into the grounds, and were regaling themselves upon the long grass.

"How do you do, Rachel, my dear," said the Corporal, with the sweetest smile that he could throw into his face.

And no wonder he smiled sweetly, for who could do otherwise upon Jackey Bach's pretty, modest daughter Rachel. But more of her another time. Off she tripped before her father, to show him the situation of the trespassers, and then she disappeared.

"He sends them to the right about face, don't he," said the Corporal, as Jackey reached the cows, and with his spade, assisted by an incomprehensible noise, drove them before him.

"Burr-r-r, burr-r-r, burr-r-r!" he cried, as his short legs were put into their quickest possible motion. "Burr-r-r, burr-r-r, burr-r-r," he roared again, as one of them, becoming restive, turned round upon him, and received a blow from the flat side of his spade, which quickly made her, with a toss and a fling, return to her companions. Having succeeded in driving them through the lodge-gate into the road, Jackey looked triumphant, but exclaimed against the carelessness of his neighbours. Being asked what would become of the cows, he replied, "Oh! let 'em take care of themselves. What business had they here? They'll find their way home, I dare say; and if they don't, why Harries must look for 'em."

Having received especial invitations to visit the

dwellings of my new friends, and faithfully promised to avail myself of them, I wished them good morning, and was dismissed with a true soldier-like salute from the Corporal, and a knowing nod from his antipodes, Jackey. I fancied there was a dispute brewing; and as I walked slowly away, heard the words "Spain, Wales, Corporal, and Bach," somewhat loudly uttered by the two old men, who, it seems, rarely meet together without falling upon certain topics upon which they can never agree.

No. II.

A WELSH VILLAGE.

As many of the small Welsh towns are little better than villages, so many of the villages scarcely deserve the name. By village we understand, either a compact little street, with its neat shop, its smart inn, and its gradations of houses, or a romantic place, with its homesteads scattered here and there over a considerable space of ground, yet looking as if they were really one family, but had strayed apart from one another, better to select picturesque situations.

We enter an English cottage expecting to see comfort and neatness, and we are not often disappointed. There is the dresser, with its display of earthenware — plates and dishes, blue and white, and flowered and pictured cups and jugs, all carefully arranged. Then the neat chairs and tables of elm or oak, the three-legged stools for the children, the eight-day clock, and, above all, the flower-pots in the window, generally bespeak attention to order and even taste. Then in the garden there is a store of vegetables — potatoes, cabbages, and onions, for food; there are herbs in abundance — camomile, thyme, sage, and rue, for luxuries or medicine; and, besides, there is the flower-bed in some little conspicuous

spot, devoted to taste. Sometimes the cottage is covered with roses; and beneath the lattice the wall-flower grows abundantly, whilst a humble paling protects these treasures from the ruthless nose of the pig or the claws of the poultry. About or near the walls of the meanest mud-hut some little flower is sure to creep: and I cannot help fancying that an in-born love for those beautiful productions of nature is as great a national characteristic in the English, as a love for the mighty mountains is of the Welsh. The children have their flower-beds, in which, if they can procure them, they cultivate the rose and tulip, or else transplant to them, from the fields, the primrose, cowslip, and violet. The young maiden has her flower-garden, in which she loves to work when her daily tasks are done; and scarcely can there be a prettier sight than the rustic damsel bending over her floral treasures, and plucking every weed from their vicinity. The old woman has her flower-garden, in which she delights to sit, breathing the air impregnated with its sweets, and looking at the gay hues of its painted inhabitants. All the pleasures of the childhood of the English cottager are connected with flowers; but such does not appear to be generally the case in Wales, though there *are*, of course, cottages over which the woodbine creeps. A slight account of the village in which our friends Jackey Bach and the Corporal reside, may give an idea of Welsh villages in general.

As you approach it, after descending a hill and walking through a pretty green lane, a distant view

of wood and mountain leads you to anticipate something picturesque. You are, however, disappointed. On each side of a *rather* dirty lane stand some six or seven houses. The first, on the right-hand, side has nothing to recommend it but a very old, white-haired man, who is for ever digging in the same place; and I have often been puzzled to know whether he ever makes any advance. Old Daffy's foot seems always on his spade, which is, at least, a decided symptom of industry. The next tenement is Jackey Bach's, which does not face the road, but, together with another under the same roof, looks into a little court, which divides it from the next house. There is nothing prepossessing here either, since the rose-tree, which Jackey's daughter Rachel tried to cultivate, was fairly rooted up by the pigs. Through the court runs a small rivulet, in which pigs, ducks, and children amuse themselves, and where the housewives wash their potatoes. This little brook, flowing as it does from high ground at the back, is pretty enough when clean. The next house is the inn. Here, as elsewhere, there cannot be found half-a-dozen houses huddled together without the nuisance of an ale-house, where a small, ill-spelt sign invites the labourer to squander his weekly earnings in intoxication and immorality. The Swan is the name that this hostel assumes to itself, with its one room, and its surrounding low wall. It is comfortable to turn to the adjoining dwelling, for in its little court grows one solitary lilac-tree, and over its walls creeps the yellow Japonica. Within dwells old Pally Lewis,

the washerwoman, and her grandchild. The lilac-tree is her greatest pride; and though it shades her one window from the rays of the sun so effectually as to darken her room, she would prefer living without light to lopping off one branch of it.

We have now proceeded up the street, and crossing over are astonished by a smart cottage with painted window-frames, painted palings, and abundance of flowers. In the gateway stands a very rotund old gentleman leaning upon a stick, and in the window sits an old lady mending stockings. The former is a retired tradesman, who, with every comfort about him, and a sister to take care of him, lives an easy life, and attends to his garden and his parlour. He thinks himself a man of consequence, and looks too well off to care for any one. Above this village mansion are some pretty fields and a plantation of firs, whilst below it are several houses closely packed together, and remarkable for untidiness, outside at least, and children. To one belongs a high flight of stone steps, leading to an entrance which is half a story from the ground; to another a small low window, in which are displayed half-a-dozen red and white streaked peppermints, two dirty-looking treacle pies, three stay-laces, a mouldy orange, some tobacco, a canister supposed to contain tea, and a penny book. Over the window is seen "Mary Davies, licensed to sell teas, sugar, tobacco, &c," and in the doorway stands Mary Davies herself, a thin woman with a red nose. In another of these dwellings live the Corporal, his wife, his son,

and his daughter; and in a third reside an old maid, a widow, and a great number of children. There are two or three other tenements on a line with these last, containing men, women, and children, of various ages and sizes, upon which I shall only remark, that I never look either upon them or their neighbours without lamenting over the little untidy courts in front of them: they are the very places for flower-beds, yet nothing but broken stones or hardened earth is to be seen. With the exception of Pally's lilac, and the flowers in front of the smart cottage with the painted palings, there is no indication of taste. I must not forget to do my pretty friend Rachel the justice to say, that although her neighbours' pigs conspired against her rose-tree in front of the house, they did not prevent her making and preserving a small flower-bed in her father's large garden of potatoes behind. It took, however, several years of persuasion to induce Jackey to relinquish this portion of ground, much as he loved his daughter.

Thanks to the landlord, the roofs and walls of the village are whole; but what he cannot do, the tenants will not do—attend either to external or internal order. The insides of the Welsh cottages are generally as wretched as their outsides. True, this is frequently occasioned by the extreme poverty of the furniture; but there is an absence of comfort about the rooms not to be overcome. One small apartment, with an uneven mud floor, contains the family and effects; a miserably small window, half covered with paper

panes, admits a scanty portion of light; a bed in one corner, and one or two turn-up bedsteads, looking like chests of drawers by day, prove the room to be both dormitory and refectory. And what a bed it is!—an immense square wooden thing, like a closet, opening with a kind of door at the side, and capable of containing, and does pretty generally contain, six or seven sleepers. The rest of the furniture is comprised in a table, a chair, a stool or a bench, a pitcher, bucket, and such like articles. The ornamental part is a little earthenware on a rickety shelf or dresser. From the ground-floor you not unfrequently look into the loft, which is attained by a ladder attached to an opening in the ceiling, if, indeed, the rafters be ceiled at all. This loft is rarely occupied, and is used as a receptacle for lumber. You are astonished at the number of inhabitants contained in these small dwellings: I have seen nine or ten children surrounding the door of a house scarcely larger than a roomy closet, all of whom, together with their parents, ate, drank, and slept within. Yet these little creatures looked rosy and healthy, and never dreamed that they were almost as closely packed as bees in a hive. I have also seen two old women living together in a room that many a dainty, well-styed pig would grunt and turn up his nose at. Two beds entirely filled one side of the long narrow apartment, a little table, a chair, and an old chest, lined the other, whilst a mere passage in the middle led from the door to the fire-place, by which the poor creatures sat. Not a symptom of a window. Did they

require light in the depth of winter, when frost and snow were biting them, they were obliged to open the door to perform their necessary duties, even though the white flakes darted in upon the scanty furniture, and the cold blast whistled through the hovel, whilst their aged limbs shook and vibrated to it. I have seen worse than this, for many of the Welsh peasantry, particularly such as dwell among the mountains, are miserably poor; but my business is not with them.

We will now return to Jacky Bach's cottage, where exist comparative comfort and plenty. Though there is nothing particularly to mark its superiority over the other houses of the village, there is an air of neatness about the interior that announces the presence of some person who wishes to be as decent as poor means will permit. When you first enter it you do *not* tread upon an unfortunate chicken, nor do you see half-a-dozen children huddled together in the corner, but you look upon poverty in neat attire.

Jackey is a widower, and has one daughter, the girl to whom I have already alluded. She has lived at home from her childhood, partly because her father loves to look upon her sweet face, and to hear her gentle voice, when he returns from his work at night, and partly on account of her delicate health. After long entreaties on the part of Rachel, and much wrath and resistance on the side of her father, the loft above their room has been ceiled, and a four-post bed placed in it for Rachel's use. It is a poor bed-room, but then it is her own; and though its

obscurity renders a looking-glass useless, she is as proud of her ceiled loft as a young lady of her elegant boudoir.

Rachel Lewis is very pretty. She too, by-the-bye, is called Rachel Bach, by way of distinction, though not herself very short. No one could look into that young girl's face and not feel a disposition to love her. She is one of the few delicate-looking Welshwomen, and she may be compared to a blush-rose blooming alone in a garden of potatoes. Her health has prevented her working, like the women in general, in the garden and the fields: her occupations are wholly domestic, and she is gentle and bashful accordingly. With a complexion as fair as the lily, she has soft dark eyes and long eyelashes. A beautiful pink flush mounts into her cheek when she speaks, and an expression of playful archness lights up, occasionally, her somewhat melancholy-looking face. Her dark hair is bound across her forehead, under a clear muslin cap, and is always neat and glossy. The striped flannel skirt and loose boddice, the short sleeves, and clean white muslin neckerchief, show to advantage her slight, yet rounded figure, which displays a natural grace in all its rustic movements. She is a strange contrast to Jackey, whose short, square form, and comical features, seem made for activity and humour. Never was there a better daughter, and never, at heart, a more loving father.

But Jackey is one of those *silly* men — and there are some such in all classes of life—who pretend to a

sovereign contempt for womankind. Thoroughly Welsh in disposition, habits, and manners, he possesses their characteristic obstinacy; and having once taken up a prejudice, or formed an opinion, you might as well seek to "turn the sun from his course" as Jackey Bach's mind from its pertinacity. Women are the butts of his ridicule — the theme of his harangues — the objects of his contempt; but, at the same time, a woman is his thorough mistress. Tell him that he has yielded to a woman, and he will look at you with a contemptuous sneer; yet Rachel manages him capitally. But does he know that he is managed? I trow not. If he sees the least symptom of his being conquered in argument or action, he either becomes obstinate as a mule, or else he gets into a red-hot Welsh passion, and puts an end to the dispute at once. It was said of Dr. Johnson, that if his pistol missed fire, he would knock his opponent down with the but-end of it; and so it was with Jackey. If he found that his daughter or his acquaintances were getting the better of him, he would stop all further discussion by a towering "let's have no more of it," and adhere more firmly than ever to his first opinion.

Rachel, as may be imagined, had no easy life. If she dared to have an opinion contrary to her father's, she was obliged to insinuate it, by beginning to agree with him, and then gradually leading him to think differently — apparently travelling the road of his mind, whilst she was, really, drawing it into her own. But her greatest difficulty existed in his

constant disputes with the corporal. These two could never agree; and it seems there was a certain *young* corporal who managed to make Rachel consider it her interest and pleasure to settle every difference that arose between the rival disputants. Her peaceable endeavours were endless; for no sooner had she patched up a "Wales and foreign parts" rent, than she had another to mend, touching the army and farming, fighting and tillage, family respectability, or, what was worse still, to soften some harsh expression of Jackey's against the corporal's "womankind," for whom he entertained a peculiar aversion.

To say truth, neither Mrs. nor Miss Davies the corporal (in Wales the professions of the gentlemen are tacked on to the names of their wives and daughters) were particularly prepossessing. The lower classes of Welsh women are not, generally speaking, pretty, and Mrs. Davies was not a favourable specimen. She had passed their good-looking age, which is from fifteen to twenty, after which, either from hard labour in the fields, or because the round-faced, ruddy bloom that characterises them is not lasting, they begin to go off. Her's was a short thick figure, strong and hardy. Legs and feet almost large enough to bear Daniel Lambert, covered with coarse black worsted stockings, and thick shoes with wooden soles, made very conspicuous by short petticoats. The usual Welsh dress, showing arms red and strong — a waist disdaining the foreign aid of whalebone — spread features — an eye without much meaning — a bronzed complexion — a somewhat flat nose — a cap, the strings

of which are flying on the "wanton wind"—a hat, the crown of which is much battered — and you have the whole figure of Nanny the corporal. Her daughter is a youthful fac simile of herself, therefore I need not describe her, and we may constantly meet with many a counterpart of both, amongst their own friends and acquaintances. To these two females, Jackey, for one cause and another, took a great dislike, — indeed neither they nor the corporal are very general favourites. Old Pally, the washerwoman, says, that "there would be no quarrelling in the village, if Davvy Davvies the corporal were out of it;" and old Pally is quite an oracle, has seen every ghost in the country, and numbers of corpse candles.

I suspect the amiable Rachel has no sinecure in managing this village cabal; but William Davies, the corporal's son, looks so vexed when his father and Jackey have "fallen out," that she is fain to persevere in her amicable endeavours, because William is so good, so industrious, and so dutiful a son, that even Jackey is obliged to allow him to be the best youth in the neighbourhood, — and it would be too bad to hurt his feelings.

One evening, when Rachel was sitting alone, knitting and humming a tune, by the little window in which her cat and her caged bullfinch were both fast asleep, the door opened, and in walked her father, evidently in much wrath. "I never will speak to that man again," he began; "and as to those silly women, they are the greatest fools I ever saw." Rachel felt alarmed, but was silent, knowing that if

she ventured to speak, she should be immediately classed amongst the female fools. "Well, girl, what are you about?" pursued Jackey, turning towards the window—"oh! knitting my stockings. Well, that's better than telling lies; and I wish all women would follow your example, and learn to hold their tongues sometimes; but with most of 'em one might as well try to stop a water-mill in a flood as their everlasting talk. I always said there was no good ever came from a woman,—no, not since the time of Eve, and that there was no believing a word they say. Eh, Rachel, do you think a woman ever told truth?"

"Indeed, I don't know, father—perhaps not: we are all given to do wickedly."

"True enough, girl, true enough; but women are such fools; they have no common sense; and yet they are as vain as if they knew every thing under the sun. I never saw but one good sort of a woman, and that was your mother. I hope you'll be like her. Twitting me about my family too, as if I'm not as good as them, and better! Only think of that Nanny Davies the corporal telling me that she was near of kin to Rees of Glanmerch, and standing out about it. Ha, ha, ha! and I know every soul belonging to her, from Griffey Rees the tinker, her great grandfather,—and I'm sure she can't go further back than him,—down to her ugly self. *She* a relation of the Rees's of Glanmerch! They'd be proud of their cousin, I'm sure, if they knew her. Don't I know all the Rees's of Glanmerch? I should think I did. There isn't better blood in the principality; and I

have heard say that they can reckon their family straight back in a line to the old kings of Wales, just as well as most of the other great folk can. Well, 'tis a good thing, since we've got no real king of our own, that all the gentlefolk are kings' relations. But such a crot as Nanny the corporal to talk about family! that is a good joke. I gave her a bit of my mind, and told her not to tell lies about what never belonged to her."

"And what did the corporal say, father?" interrupted Rachel.

"Say! why he stood like a rake-stem for ever so long, and then he laughed, and said, as how all his forefathers, and his wife's too, were very respectable. 'More fine people amongst 'em than you ever thought of, much less had belonging to you, Jackey *Bach*,' says he. '*Bach*,' says I, '*Mr. Corporal!* what do you mean by calling me Bach, you long pole you, — as long as to-day and to-morrow?' 'Pole or not,' says Mrs. Nanny, 'we're better than you, and I know that our children can marry very well if they *choose*.' 'Marry! let 'em marry,' says I: 'they shouldn't marry a child of mine if I had twenty instead of one, and if they came straight from that old law-maker King Howel they tell of, and had one of his palaces to live in.' And with that I walks away, just telling Mrs. Nanny, by way of leave-taking, that all women were bad enough, but that she was the worst of 'em."

Poor Rachel listened very calmly to her father's long discourse for some time; but as he drew near

the end of it, her knitting fell from her hand, and a bright red flush overspread her face, whilst her heart beat quickly, she scarcely knew why. Her father's quarrels with the corporal, and his dislike of marriage, were too well known to grieve or annoy her; but there was a meaning in what he had now said that made his words sink deeply and bitterly into her heart. Had she inquired of herself why the involuntary tear started into her eye, she would not have been able to answer more satisfactorily than would the violet, were it asked why the dew-drop lay upon its breast. Yet the tear was there, and a strange emotion deprived her of the power of uttering a word which might mitigate her father's anger. The self-possession with which she usually turned the course of his thoughts on such occasions had deserted her. She looked out of the window to avoid meeting her father's eye; and whilst she was unconsciously stroking the cat, a clear sweet whistle was heard in the lane, and the tune of "Ar hyd y' nos" met her ear. Her heart beat quickly again; but before she had time to feel conscious that the sounds, for the first time in her life, made her sad, William Davies, the young corporal, passed the window and stood in the doorway. He was returning from his work, and had made an excuse to himself for calling upon Jackey.

William Davies was a fine, tall young man, with an open, honest face, which looked as if its owner had never injured any one, and in which much shrewd good sense was discernible. Now, although

Jackey liked this young man for his own sake, he hated him for his father's and mother's, therefore he had chosen a most unlucky moment for his visit, — anger at his parents reigning predominant in the mind of the man whom he wished of all others to please, and quite ejecting any little kind feeling towards himself. His excuse, moreover, was an unfortunate one. After a hasty glance at Rachel, he began straight upon his errand, without remarking Jackey's clouded visage.

"Would you please to lend me that book you were telling me about, in which we can read of the old Welsh kings?" he said.

"Oh!" replied Jackey, with a sneer, "you want to see which king you came from, I suppose! There are a good many Rees's in the book, and your mother's family is particular good."

"Oh no," replied William; "I only wanted to read the history of a great king called Llewellen, that Rachel was speaking of."

Rachel, be it remarked, was a bit of a scholar.

"Well," again began Jackey, "I don't think there *are* any Llewellens in your family; but I dare say your father and mother know of some. Can you tell me what relation you are to Rees of Glanmerch?"

William could not restrain a smile, as he replied, "None that I know of."

"Well, I'm glad you're honest enough to say so; there's your mother, now, declares she's near of kin to Rees of Glanmerch, as high a family as needs be."

"Oh yes," slily insinuated William; "but what do women know of such things? 'Tis only for something to say."

"That's very true, boy, that's very true," responded Jackey, whose face brightened at finding some one to agree with him on his favourite topic; and who gave an inward chuckle which Rachel hailed as a sign of returning good humour.

Yet she did not feel glad. She knew too well that her father's sayings were unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, and that his once-formed determinations were pertinaciously adhered to. She knew also that what he uttered in anger was generally the ebullition of what he had conceived in his calmer moments. She took her knitting, and sat down by the little round table, without joining in the conversation that was passing near her. Jackey was exhausting all his quaint sayings on his female enemies, and was concluding with the declaration that the world would be much better without women; when William, casting a side glance at Rachel, perceived that she looked pale and dejected.

"Are you well to-night, Rachel?" he said, as he drew his chair towards the table, and looked kindly at her.

"Oh dear, yes," replied Rachel, hastily; "quite well, thank you."

Honest Jackey proved in an instant how ill he put his theory in practice; for, despite his contempt for women, he looked all anxiety at the bare mention of Rachel's being unwell. He went up to

her, and asked her what was the matter, and what made her look so pale. Receiving a sweet smile for answer, he patted her on the back, and said she was hearty enough, and strong enough to dance at his wedding whenever he gave her a mother-in-law, by which time *he* should be able to dance too. "Now go and get the book that William wants," he added; "and then we will have a bit of supper."

Rachel went to the little book-shelf that William had made and put up for her, and took down an old Welsh book containing the history of Llewellen. She gave it to William, who was about to take his departure, when Jackey said, "You may as well eat your bit of supper with us;"—an invitation to which he gladly acceded, and seated himself at once by Rachel's side.

Rachel quickly spread a clean but coarse cloth on the little table, upon which she placed some fresh oaten cakes, thin and crisp, some cheese, and a jug of beer. A lettuce from the garden completed their humble repast; but William thought it the best he had ever partaken of, since it was Rachel who spread the board, and Rachel who presided at the feast.

Now Jackey Bach had, along with his peculiarities, much that was good and right-minded about him. Reverently did he bless God for the evening meal, both before they partook of it and after it was finished; and, as he sat down in his old arm-chair and looked affectionately at his daughter, it would have been difficult for a stranger to have detected the irascibility of his nature. They talked quietly

and soberly, whilst William and Rachel managed to agree on all points with Jackey, and to fall into his notions.

Let it not be imagined that what is called "tact" exists only in cultivated life. The two young people before us display not a little, though theirs is amiable and innocent in its end and aim, and successful too, inasmuch as it makes Jackey pleased both with himself and them. This was not the first time that William had supped with his friends, and they were accustomed to make no stranger of him. Rachel, therefore, removed the cloth, and going once more to her book-shelf, took down a large green-baize covered Bible, out of which she every evening read a chapter to her father. The old man folded his arms upon the table; and, as Rachel leant her pale cheek upon her hand, and with a somewhat faltering voice began to read, William looked grave and attentive whilst he fixed his eyes upon the modest face of the reader. It was the beginning of summer, and the sun shone, as he was setting, upon the little room, shedding his last beams upon the solemn party. Rachel's sweet voice made the ancient Welsh musical and sonorous, for she read well: and let us not blame William, if, whilst he listened to the truths of the sacred volume, one worldly thought crept into his mind, and if that thought was, "What a good wife so good a daughter would make!"

It was nearly nine o'clock, a late hour for Jackey's primitive habits, when William said Good night, and, thanking Jackey, and pressing Rachel's hand the

least bit in the world, left the house. The father and daughter retired to rest; and the latter, after having committed herself and all she loved to the protection of the good Providence who watches over every one that trusts in Him, lay down upon her humble bed, and having shed a few tears of sorrow at the recollection of her father's declaration, sunk into a calm sleep, with a mind free from guile, and happy in the consciousness of having performed her duty during the day.

No. III.

DYNEVOR PARK.

No massive iron gateway opens for you as you enter Dynevor Park — no handsome stone lodge is reared where the drive begins — there are no lions to guard the way, and no columns to adorn it. A large gate of simple wood introduces you, by the side of which is a low cottage, almost hidden amongst the trees. A high park wall receives the gate, on either side, in which an arched door-way is left, with a low swing-gate, to admit foot-passengers. Nothing could be more unpretending and simple, yet nothing could be more appropriate. We do not want grand architectural design where Nature has spread all that the eye could desire to look upon. Could the iron gateway, the stone pedestal, or the fanciful Elizabethan lodge add to the magnificence of the scenes that open in succession as we enter and advance up the drive? would they not look like impertinent innovations upon Nature's own domains? The grounds that surround the ancient palace of Cambria's kings, should be as primitive as possible; and the spell that hangs over a place where associations of the past seem suspended on every primeval tree, should be unbroken by the upstart things of modern taste.

Here we may indeed say Nature sits in supreme dignity. All is in perfect keeping. The works of man are not sufficiently prominent to withdraw the attention from the works of God. The house, though large and worthy of its place, is plain and square: one glance at it is enough: there is nothing to excite particular admiration or curiosity. If your eye linger upon it, it is to admire the deep wood by which it is relieved, rising in gloomy masses tier above tier. The park paling — the little low stone bridge — the occasional old rails — all is in character, all mossy with age, all unvulgarised by one daub of paint.

It is summer — broad, full, glorious summer! Brightly and gaily the sun sits in his clear blue fields above, and seems to laugh upon the world beneath him; while the plains, the mountains, the rivers, the brooks, the woods reflect his mirth. The woods, did I say? Could those impervious old forest giants, those imperturbable oaks, deign to return a smile? Indissoluble appears their union, and gloomily grand is their shade; yet on their broad tops, each undistinguished from the other, the sun-beams find a sporting place, and brighten here and there the dark green foliage with their golden hues.

Let us watch from this hill, and from beneath the shade of this thick group of firs, the lights and shadows that fall upon the scene before us. Beneath is the winding road. Darkly it comes out from the oak-wood, and gladly meets the sun, for rarely can a beam reach it through its thick canopy, and then it retires again to its gloomy shade. A group of the

graceful maiden ash, supported by a few old oaks, crowns that gently sloping hillock. Down the slope, and almost hidden from view, is the little church. The slated roof glitters from among the trees, whilst the enormous yews on one side of it look reverently solemn. One or two white-washed graves, like heaps of snow left here and there after a thaw beneath the sheltering hills, peep brightly forth, as if unmindful of the dead they inclose. Beyond, the park rises in undulating acclivities. The hay has just been carried from this portion of ground, and the short turfy grass is smooth as a lake. Here a shadow gives it a hue of darker green — there a light opens a space of greenish yellow. Farther on, amidst the meadows, winding into the remote distance, flows the river, the sweet Towey, from which the vale takes its name. Brightly it sparkles in the sunshine, and not a cloud overshadows its long course, till at last it seems to melt into the fields, which in their turn mingle with the hills, the richly wooded hills, that mount higher and higher before they form the horizon. All inaminate things are glowing with delight, and all the animated world is in exultation. Loudly the birds are singing on every tree. The thrush, the blackbird, the goldfinch, the linnet, pour forth their notes in rivalry, — and now one holds the air with ecstasy, now another draws out the linked sweetness of a long warble. Happy creatures! now they spread their wings for flight, and skim along the air in the warm sun, and then return to the hospitable bough to furl their pinions and pour forth another flood of song.

After descending the slope, we come upon the little church. A Welsh church-yard — a real Welsh church-yard, is a very lovely thing; and this is beautifully kept, as well as finely placed. In the midst of a grand old domain, it stands, and must long have stood, almost alone. One house only is near, and the perfect solitude of the scene gives it a solemnity which presses upon the heart. Where nature is greenest, freshest, and loveliest, you stand amidst the graves of the dead. Where the trees, the flowers, the grass, the tomb-weeds root in life, man moulders to decay, You are conscious that whilst you gaze in admiration at the "everlasting hills," the gentle river, the soft greensward, and the noble trees, your feet press the dust of generations of men.

The yew-tree is particularly calculated for the church-yard. It never looks gay. Its leaves never change their melancholy hue — through its thick foliage the sun cannot pierce — the birds do not sing among the branches, and scarcely does the wind move its repose. Sadly it looks upon the funeral procession, and after seeing the coffin lowered into the grave, casts for ages its deep shade over the turf that covers the dead. Here it shelters many a humble grave upon which the affection of relatives and friends has planted flowers and sweet-smelling herbs. A plot of ground is formed into the shape and size of a coffin, round which slates or tiles are placed, to confine the smooth earth in which the flowers are set. These tiles are white-washed, and the rose, the mari-

gold, the thyme, the primrose, or the violet, are planted within their little enclosure. Thus, if the cottages of the Welsh are destitute of flowers, they lavish them on the last resting-place of their departed friends.

The name of this church speaks of olden times, and monastic days. "Llandefeisant," or the "Church of the Saints," carries us back into the period of popery. The name admits of conjecture, for, besides the common meaning given to the word "saint," the ancient Welsh had another of a different kind. Certain patrons of their churches, who held lands let out to men taking the name of abbots, were called saints. These lands were independent of prince or lord, and were held, it is supposed, for the support of the sanctuaries or places of refuge, as well as of such persons whose lives and properties were protected by them. From the reverence of the Welsh for their churches, the privileges of sanctuary were very extensive and very religiously observed amongst them. Those who sought an asylum within the holy precincts of one of these places of refuge, even though they were flying from the wrath of an offended sovereign, were, with their families and properties, safe whilst they remained there. Many were the laws which Howel Dda, or the Good, made concerning the sanctuary, of whom Spenser says in the prophetic discourse of Merlin with Britomart—

> "And Howell Dda shall goodly well indew
> The salvage minds with skill of just and trew;"

And these very laws were placed in the royal palace, which stands, to use again our old poet's words, —

"Amongst the woody hills of Dyneuowre."

May not then this little church, situated as it is in the vicinity of those "woody hills" and of that ancient palace, derive its name from some active patrons, or "saints;" and may not the ground upon which we stand have been a sanctuary for many a proscribed or doomed man?

Imagination and conjecture run wild together in such a scene, and a picture presents itself to my mind's eye, which I must be pardoned for introducing amongst sketches which profess to be taken from nature alone.

Let us imagine a wretched fugitive rushing breathless and headlong down the greensward, after bursting from yonder distant trees. He is one of the adherents of the unfortunate Howel, the son of Edwin, who has been defeated and slain by Griffith, prince of North Wales, at the source of the Towey, the river which wanders so peacefully through that meadow in the back-ground. He pauses not to consider whether Howel ap Edwin has met the fate he deserves at the hand of the son whose father, the well-beloved Llewellen, he had previously helped to assassinate; he tarries not to meditate upon the destiny of his friends and countrymen, whose blood is even now reddening the source of the river; he thinks not even of his wife and children, towards

whom his flight was directed; his thoughts are of his own life, now menaced by his pursuers. Like a hunted stag, he starts as he enters the open field, and looks hastily around him. Now he casts a hurried glance behind, as if expecting to behold his pursuers; and now his eyes wander quickly over the scene before and around. He gazes a moment on the trees that encircle the church and sanctuary. It is but a moment: like an arrow from the bow, or the forked lightning from the sky, or a thought through the mind, he darts down the hill. New vigour seems given to his enfeebled limbs. He crosses the space that intervenes between the hill and the church, whilst the chapel bell tolls six, and ere its last stroke dies away upon the air he has attained the sanctuary and is safe within its precincts. It is the hour of vespers, and a priest approaches. He finds the unhappy fugitive on his knees, returning thanks to the Almighty, with uplifted hands, for having saved him from a murderous death. Before he can assure him of the protection of the church, a party of armed men issue from the wood. They, too, pause to glance around them, and then rush down the slope. They reach the sanctuary, and, like wolves who have lost their prey, stand and gaze savagely on their intended victim. The fugitive, the priest, and a few unarmed people are alone assembled. The pursuers might still wreak their vengeance; but no — awe for the church and respect for her sanctuaries are too deeply rooted in their minds: they will not stain with blood the holy place; they will not bring down the wrath

of Heaven upon their own heads. Rage in their hearts, they make the sign of the cross, and walk sullenly away in search of other men, over whom the sad chances of civil warfare have given them a temporary power, and whose happiness it may not prove to find a sanctuary whither to flee in their peril and find safety.

Leaving the Church of the Saints, and all conjecture respecting its origin and subsequent history, let us proceed to explore the park. Under the fine old oaks the cattle find shelter from the declining sun. Poor creatures! how the flies torment them! No sooner is that handsome Alderney comfortably chewing the cud as she sleeps, than "buz" goes a fly to her back and wakes her from her sweet visions of green grass and spring water. The sturdy black creature by her side, of true Welsh breed, sleeps on as if nothing could disturb her but the milkmaid and her pail. Another rubs herself lustily against a tree, whilst a fourth whirls her tail about in reach of a michievous fly, but she only lashes her sides in vain. Some graze the short parched grass, whilst others seek the little well beneath that old oak, and jostle one another most clumsily to get a draught of its clear water.

A zigzag path takes us up into the drive again, by the side of a defile, at the bottom of which runs a stream; a plank is thrown across it, and gnarled branches of trees hang over it, meeting in the middle as if they were shaking hands. We pass on before a splendid view, and through much fine wood.

A sunk fence and a park gate bring us into a new scene. We come upon a party of haymakers, with the goodly bailiff at their head. Almost all of them have familiar faces. There stands the corporal, looking complacently down upon Jackey Bach, who is drinking a hearty draught from a keg of ale. A long row of young and old women are raking with might and main, amongst whom are Rachel and Pally Lewis. The former, together with some of her companions, is singing "The rising of the Lark" most merrily, and sweetly their voices sound as their work goes on. They rake the fragrant hay up to the loaded waggon, by which stands the bailiff, urging them to exertion and execution, since he is sure "there is thunder in the air, and there will be a storm by and by." Upon the top of the waggon stands William the young corporal, disposing of the hay, and not *quite* unmindful of Rachel as she advances. The waggon, the bailiff, and William move off to another part of the field, whilst by degrees the old women slacken their labour.

They require a sharp eye, these good people, for when they are not vigilantly watched, they will never injure themselves by hard work. As if by one consent, they all attack Pally Lewis, for "the story of Mr. and Mrs. Evans the tinman, that she was just going to tell them when the bailiff came up."

"Well," begins Pally, leaning on her rake; and as *she* begins and leans on *her* rake, most of the others put themselves in attitudes of attention, and lean on *their* rakes, until the work is pretty nearly at

a stand-still. Some few, and Rachel is one of them, continue their labours; but even the most industrious of these evidently slacken occasionally, as some wonderful portion of the story attracts particular attention.

"Well, as I was saying," recommences Pally, "Mr. and Mrs. Evans the tinman were coming home very late the other night, when Mrs. Evans fancied she saw something. 'Twas a very dark night—pitch dark—and she could'nt see her hand before her—and they were driving in the little cart along with tome tins——"

"And what was it she saw?" interrupted Peggy Morris.

"The tins," pursues Pally, "were rattling and making a great noise; they had saucepans, and tea-kettles, and dripping-pans, and those things for roasting meat, with hooks hanging to 'em, and——"

"Ay, to be sure," again exclaims the anxious Peggy; "but what did she see?"

Pally pertinaciously goes on her own way: "The tins made a terrible racket just by that lonesome place near the quarry, and the horse took fright, but he did'nt run away—dear no! he saw something too, just as Mrs. Evans did, and stood as still as any stone. Mrs. Evans cries out in a fright, 'What's that, my dear? Don't you see a light?' 'No, not I,' says Mr. Evans, whilst he beat the horse to make him get on; but not a peg would he move. 'Stop, stop, 'tis no good beating him,' says Mrs. Evans; 'he sees it too. Look you there just a minute—a little

bit to the left—don't you see something?' Mr. Evans looked and fancied he did see something. 'I declare, I'm quite frightened,' says Mrs. Evans, bursting out a-crying: 'suppose it should be—' She could'nt say the rest, but she meant a 'corpse candle?' "

At this part of the story Pally's voice sinks to a whisper, and her auditors crowd more closely round her. "Well, what next?" murmur a dozen voices. Pally continues:—

"Nothing as Mr. Evans could do would make the horse get on, though he did seem to pull at the cart: but the truth was, he was too frightened; for all kinds of beasts are afraid of *them sort of things*, you know. 'There it is,' cries Mrs. Evans, and gripes hold of her husband's arm, who sees a light walking rather fast along at a distance. "Oh dear! oh dear! there 'tis again," says Mrs. Evans, as she saw the light every now and then between the trees. "Suppose it should be a warning," says she. "Oh! my poor little children!" and when she saw it again, she gave a great scream, and the horse gave a great pull, and over-went cart, tins, and all into the ditch."

"Oh dear! oh dear! poor things! poor things!" exclaim the auditors all at once.

"Oh! they wasn't hurt," continues old Pally, "but they did'nt know what to do. Mrs. Evans, the tinman, was more dead than alive from fright about the light; and Mr. Evans couldn't move the cart, or find the tins there in the pitch dark. As luck would have it, however, they heard the wheels

of a carriage, and by and by up drives Mr. Thomas Kilwenock's, with two lights. The coachman pulled up — they helped up the cart — picked up the tins and Mrs. Evans together, and righted every thing, so that Mr. Evans was able to drive on again. But poor Mrs. Evans! oh, she's very poorly; and no wonder — for who ever saw a corpse candle without ——"

"There's Mr. Rees — stop — make haste — there's Mr. Rees!" interrupts an old woman, and in a moment, rakes, forks, legs, and arms are in motion, until you would say that never was seen more industrious, hard-working womankind. But up comes the bailiff, puffing with wrath at the slow progress they have made.

"What business have you idling your time in this way," he cries, "don't you see the rain coming on, and you doing nothing? I tell you it 'll rain before night, and we shan't have the hay in. But what do you care? you pocket the money, and what's the difference to you if his Lordship's hay is all spoilt?"

Leaving the bailiff and haymakers to their work, we follow the course of a shady road, until we enter the impenetrable forests of oak in which the Druid performed his idolatrous worship, and where many a persecuted Cambrian found refuge from his English oppressors. The silence is strangely solemn. Nothing breaks it but the occasional rustling of the leaves or underwood, made by the step of a frightened deer, or the hare brushing past you. The pale light that

enters these vast solitudes does but reveal their natural gloom. On, on we wander; path succeeds to path, one branching out of another, until we are lost in the maze. Gaunt and gigantic stand the native oaks, in long impervious lines, each a subject worthy of contemplation. The massy trunk, that for centuries has braved the tempest, still stands as firmly as if nothing but a miracle could remove it from its place.

Enormous roots run out on every side of it; and while they grasp the earth, defy the elements. From the venerable trunk start out afar the grotesque and huge boughs, each a tree in size, either menacing the mid-air, or sweeping the ground. Above is a thick roof of leaves, with branches interlacing and forming innumerable rafters; beneath is a low underwood of briers or small bushes, giving way here and there to an area of green, a patch of fern, or a winding path. In the distance, the further we look, the deeper the gloom, and the more impenetrable the forest. Sometimes a ray of the sun pierces through an opening in the trees, and, slanting downward, crosses their trunks, and reaches the ground, making a bright line or spot in the deep shade; but still the whole character of the scene is gloom and solemnity.

By a winding and rugged path we attain the old castle. It is a fine ruin, well situated. Seated on a hill, it is surrounded on three sides by towering woods, and overlooks on the fourth a magnificent

prospect. Here dwelt the ancient Cambrian princes, and these were the walls that once resounded to

"High-born Hoel's harp and soft Llewellen's lay."

The castle was built in the time of the Conqueror, and was one of the last strongholds that sustained itself against the attacks of the English. Never did wild flowers grow more luxuriantly than amongst these ruined walls. There is not a broken stone, not a crevice, that does not boast its harebell, fern, creeping thyme, or some one of the thousand flowers with which nature decks even the mouldering works of art. Is it because nature pities her rival sister art, in her hours of neglect and decay, that she thus throws over her a covering of her loveliest things? or is it the pride of superiority that bids her lavish them upon her? Can it be with nature as with us? We sometimes seek to wound our fallen rivals by our favours; but then they spurn and reject them. No: nature, in this, as in all her bounties, teaches us a useful lesson,—that poverty and fallen magnificence command our respectful and compassionate endeavours to shield them from the public gaze, rather than our contempt and neglect, by which we expose them to it.

Although a very short time may seem to have elapsed since I entered Dynevor Park, many hours have really passed by, and evening has stolen imperceptibly on, warning that the solitary woods, however beautiful, must be quitted, and the more open country gained. By making a short cut across

another portion of the park, we arrive again at the haymakers, who, having finished their labours, are forming themselves into groups, and resting under the trees to finish their noggins of ale, before they return to their respective dwellings.

Jackey Bach and the corporal, by turns, amuse the company with humorous sayings, or witty retorts, whilst William and Rachel, by some strange accident, find themselves side by side at a little distance from the rest of the party, eagerly discussing the merits of Llewellen, whose history William has been reading in the book lent him by Rachel. William is a true Welshman, and a spark of the old patriotic fire rises as he enthusiastically exclaims, —

"I could have shed the last drop of blood in my veins, Rachel, for such a man as he was."

"And only to think, William, that he was once in this very place. Perhaps he stood under this tree, or rode past this field on his war-horse. Don't you feel strange at the thought of being where he may have been?"

"I feel, Rachel, as if I should like, at this minute, to fight that bad king Edward, who used him so shamefully."

"And then his wife," blushed Rachel, "that beautiful Eleanor; how hard-hearted and cruel they were about her; and how long they kept her away in England before he could marry her. Poor thing! and she didn't live long after all. Oh! how sorry I was when she died! I dare say he didn't care much what he did when she was gone."

"I shouldn't think he did, Rachel," responded William, looking earnestly in the face of the timid girl, "for, indeed, it must be very hard for a man to lose a wife whom he loved as well as Llewellen did Eleanor, and for whom he had waited so long, and done so much. I should break my heart, I am sure, if——"

Here William stopped, for he did not exactly know how to proceed, and Rachel, whilst her eyes involuntarily looked towards the ground, felt, as she would herself have expressed it, "very strange," at the idea of William having a wife at all. Nanny, the corporal, had been watching this pair with very malicious intentions, and when they were in the most interesting part of their conversation, drew near Jackey, and slily whispered,—

"Well, if *you* would be too proud to let your girl marry any one belonging to me, somebody else wouldn't be, I think;" and with this she pointed to William and Rachel. The sneer on her face at once told Jackey what she meant, and although he pretended neither to understand her allusion, nor to notice the young couple, the hint was not without its effect. He had never imagined it possible that Rachel could entertain other feelings for William than those of friendship, nor did he now suppose such to be the case, still he was decided upon proving to his enemy, Nanny, how little he esteemed her or hers. He accordingly took the first opportunity, afforded by a pause after a song, to call Rachel to him, and to tell her to get her rake and come home. William was holding the rake for her, with the in-

tention of carrying it to its journey's end, and he spoke to that effect.

"Oh, no, thank you, *Mr.* William," said Jackey; "who ever heard of the Rees's of Glanmerch carrying a rake? Why, your *mamma* would be quite shocked. Come, Rachel, girl, take your rake, and let us go home: or, no — here's Nat Lewis going our way, and he'll be proud to carry it, I'm sure."

Up jumped a red-haired youth, one of Rachel's admirers, and stretched out his hand towards William for the rake. William was on fire. "No," he began, when an imploring look from Rachel silenced him. "Give me the rake, please William," she said. "Thank'ee Nat, I'd rather carry it myself, it helps me on;" and without giving Jackey time to remonstrate, which he was preparing to do, she walked off alone, so quickly that the old man could scarcely follow her, telling him that she was "just going to overtake Pally who was on before, for she had a word to say to her, and she would wait for him at the lodge."

William looked sadly discomfited, and Nat did not appear much better pleased; but whilst the former left his friends of the hay-field, the latter sat himself comfortably down upon the grass, and was soon laughing heartily at his own jokes, as well as at those of his companions. Nat Lewis was a well-known lover of Rachel's, and being a farmer's son, and "very well to do in the world," was favoured by Jackey, although his daughter decidedly rejected him.

Rachel soon overtook Pally, and having asked her some simple question, waited with her until her

father joined them. He looked rather thundery, and much more surely presaged a storm than did the sky when the bailiff threatened the haymakers with rain and accused them of idleness. Whether the cloud burst upon Rachel, or whether her sunny smile dispelled it, I cannot say, as a glorious sunset invited me to the hill which surmounts the hay-field.

The western sky is one flood of amber light, pale when compared with the full, broad, golden orb, that is majestically descending behind the distant hills. Opposite is a long range of mountains. Here and there, amidst them, like a bright star, a white-washed cottage shines; whilst below them, and skirting the park, runs a dark pine-wood. Slowly the sun moves downward, the sky deepening around him, as if to support him in his descent, or to form his nightly couch. A warmer glow suffuses the face of nature as he bids her good-night, and she blushes at his leave-taking. He has touched the hill, so it would seem, and is now half hidden behind its impenetrable curtain. Slowly, softly, yet grandly, he finishes our day, and retires from our sight, to bless other lands with his countenance. Still he leaves his radiance behind him, which lingers till the birds are hushed in the woods, and the grasshopper is silent in the fields. The haymakers have all departed to their homes, and the summer twilight approaches; that time when gentle and holy thoughts lull the passions and tumults which the labours and accidents of the day have produced.

No. IV.

A COUNTRY TOWN.

Our town, though of considerable importance in this part of the world, might, at a first glance, be reckoned by many an assuming person, a large village. A town, however, it is, containing several streets, dignified by different names, such as "Carmarthen Street," "High Street," and the like. As there is not the slightest danger of losing your way amongst their mazes, you at first rather wonder why these streets are named at all. You enter at one end of the town, drive straight through it, and go out at the other end. On your right you see one little street branching off, and on your left another of larger dimensions, whilst houses surround the church, both upon the hill and at its base. There are one or two other small, detached streets, or lanes; but as "every body knows every body," why should they all be named? Let us look on the shop doors, and we shall perhaps guess.

There we see John James, William James, and a host of Jameses: Lewis Lewis, David Lewis, and twenty other Lewises: Griffey Griffiths, Thomas Griffiths, and an incalculable number of Griffithses. There are Thomases, Williamses, Davieses, and Shenkinses without end. Two or three families of the

same name live next door to each other; one selling haberdashery, another meat, and a third gingerbread. Half a dozen sets of Joneses may dwell in the same house, and as many Evanses may dine at the same table, yet all be totally unconnected with each other. Without names to the streets, then, the postmaster would find considerable difficulty in knowing to which of the hundred Lewises, Joneses, Jenkinses, or Evanses he must send the different letters, and a stranger in discovering the particular Mr., Mrs., or Miss Rees he came to visit. Imagine a *billet-doux* addressed to a fair young lady, opened by an old maid; or a secret, backbiting correspondence falling into the hands of the object of it! the consequences might be any thing but agreeable to the parties concerned. In London, or in any English town, it is singular that in reading the names throughout a whole street of shops, you rarely see the same occur twice. In Wales, on the contrary, where all the inhabitants must originally have sprung from the same families, each of which families had its beginning in Prince *Somebody*, you have only to learn by heart a dozen names or so, and you cannot fail of knowing the appellations of all the residents of the town and neighbourhood, the English *settlers* excepted. The great man of the place and his shoemaker, how much-soever they may dispute over a pair of shoes, cannot quarrel concerning their names. We may have "'Squire Evans, Pontpren;" "Evans the butler, Pontpren;" and "Evan Evans the boy, Pontpren:" but the 'squire, the butler, and the boy would be all

equally surprised were they asked whether they were related to each other.

Nothing is more amusing than to hear the place of residence, profession, or trade of a man, added not only to his own name, but to that of his wife and daughters. Not unfrequently a nick-name is used to distinguish particular persons, which, becoming habitual, has an equally strange effect. For instance, these two old women who are gossiping together, and discussing the probable contents of a note which one of them holds in her hand, are called "Betty Tock" and "Mary Patch," the former name signifying very little and insignificant, the latter very poor and wearing patched garments.

"Well, Betty," says Mary Patch, "where are you going with that note?"

"Oh," replies Betty, all importance, "I've got to carry it to Mrs. Thomas, the captain, from Mrs. James, the doctor."

Mary Patch leans upon her sweeping broom, and would like to know something of its contents, whilst Betty Tock confidently insinuates that she thinks there's a party going to be, for Mr. and Mrs. Jones the lawyer, are staying at Mrs. James the doctor's, and notes have been sent to Miss Price the clergyman, Mr. Rotherch the curate, Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Lewis, Llansannan, and she didn't know who besides."

Betty Tock and Mary Patch are joined by a poor idiot boy, and an extraordinary trio they make. "Betty Tock," or "Old Betty," as she is familiarly

called, is the shortest old body in the town. Every one knows her well, for she flatters and begs of you at the same time. If you have sixpence in your pocket, her commendatory whine will surely get it out. She will tell you that she wishes the streets were paved with gold for your feet; that she would get out of bed at any hour of the night, and walk any number of miles to serve you; and then she will gently insinuate that she didn't get her parish allowance last week, or that she was trying to make up money enough to buy a pair of shoes to go to church, for she hasn't been to church a Sunday or two because of the holes they have in 'em. After this, she induces you to charity by bringing forward a good example; Miss Lewis, or Mrs. Hughes, gave her sixpence the other day, and they are "uncommon kind to her." "I havn't long to live," she says, drawing her hand across her eyes, "for I'm near ninety, very old, and can't do what I could once: a little knitting now and then, to turn a penny, or selling a *couple* of apples, is the most I can help myself with now."

Poor Mary Patch is almost as old as Betty, and much more ragged. "She is not quite right," they say, though she displays no symptoms of insanity either in her daily occupations or conversation; the former consisting in sweeping from morning till night a broad piece of road, the latter in scolding the troublesome boys who delight in teazing her, by throwing stones over the places she has swept, or scattering the heaps of dust she has collected. "Go along now there, you bad, naughty boys. I'll tell your father,

Thomas Jones; you see if I don't. What's the good of my wearing out my brooms sweeping here, if you dirty the road again directly? You wicked boys you, I'll tell upon you; see if I don't. There again," she exclaims, appealing to some passenger, "isn't it too bad? There I go sweep, sweep, all day long, and 'tis no good in the world. Them wicked boys undoes all as I do directly."

The idiot boy, another well-known appendage to our town, completes the group before us. He looks up into the faces of the two old women with infantine simplicity, but with less than infantine consciousness. He is a singular and melancholy-looking creature, but not unhappy. Deformed in almost every limb, and deprived of the powers of mind and speech, he creeps about from place to place, known to, and protected by, every one. The whole town is his friend, and he, in his turn, is the friend of the whole town, since all his exertions are essentially for the public good. In the first place, he is deputy sexton, and sees every body in and out of church, carefully locking the doors after them, and remitting the keys to his superior in command. In the second, he, like his companion Mary Patch, is a kind of clerk of the roads, and a decided enemy to stray stones and such like obstacles. Does he come across one in his perambulations, he, with considerable difficulty, first of all lays down his stick, then, with still greater effort, stoops; and, as well as his poor deformed hands will allow him, removes it from the path. Is the stone too ponderous for him, he

stands by it, watching it as wistfully as a cat would watch a mouse, until some one of his youthful allies chance to appear, when, pointing with his stick, and uttering an unintelligible guttural sound, he gives him to understand that he wishes it taken away, and his orders are instantly obeyed, for every boy in town, however refractory towards his school-master, is docile as a lamb to the commands of poor Morgan.

But the trio are about to separate; Betty Tock moves off with her note to Mrs. Thomas, the captain's; poor Morgan hobbles away to the churchyard, where he is accustomed to sit and sun himself among the white-washed tombs, and Mary Patch remains where she is, sweeping and scolding as usual.

A small town on an elevation in the midst of a green valley, with a bright stream running through it, looks, to say the least for it, very snug and comfortable, as from another height you glance down upon it. It was evening when I first drew near our little town, and as it lay snugly nestled amongst its amphitheatre of mountains, it appeared the abode of peace and happiness. If the consciousness pressed upon you for a moment that much of good and evil was within, it was lost in the contemplation of the quiet it was apparently enjoying; still you felt that, though partly shut out from the world, it had a little world within itself. There was an assemblage of houses thickly crowded together, from which rose the curling smoke of many a chimney, and within which you imagined the cheerful hearth and the

happy family gathered around it, for one always fancies bright scenes on a fine May day. The houses that appeared in its vicinity, scattered here and there by the river's bank, or amongst the trees,—the country seat—the farm—the cottage—all were equally at rest. "Could any thing ever trouble a scene so peaceful?" was the question the softened heart asked itself. "Could a place so far removed from the busy theatre of the world be exposed to its tumults and changes?" The question was soon answered. We descended the hill, lost sight of the town, and in about half an hour arrived within its precincts. Happiness and unhappiness—health and sickness—riches and poverty—sobriety and dissipation were visible. The young, the middle-aged, and the old appeared in all their different characters, and told, that even here, every passion and emotion that troubles life in a more extended sphere, had found an entrance and made an abode.

As in all small towns, we find the dwellings of the rich and poor in close contact with one another. Here, next door to a small cottage, rises a good stone house, the inhabitants of which still preserve old Welsh notions of hospitality. In ancient times the house and table of a Cambrian were open to every person, whether friend or stranger, of whatever rank he might be; and this hospitality is still a national characteristic, for if the people do not, as did their ancestors, offer you water to wash your feet, and consider your acceptance of it as an earnest of your being their guest for the night, they welcome you

with such evident warmth and cordiality, that you cannot avoid feeling at once at home with them.

Passing by the stone edifice and its hospitable inmates, we see the usual number of shops and private dwellings, interspersed with most fashionable disregard of order. Here stands the hotel, with its iron railings and balcony, and a very good one it is; there a small ale-house, and a very bad one it is. Here the comfortable residence of a private gentleman, there a huckster's shop; here the town-hall, there the broad square market-place. Now we come back upon the church, situated in the best part of the town, and very well situated. It is a venerable looking building, with three or four fine elms, and one large chesnut-tree in its extensive church-yard, from which we have a lovely view of distant hills, and round which are grouped the most respectable of our houses. The post-office comes next, and shops again, — booksellers, chemists, linen-drapers, &c., in due succession. But as the laws of precedence are as strictly attended to, and as much disputed in these parts as at court, we will stop at what is, *par excellence*, called, "*The* Shop," the proprietor of which, being also *par excellence* styled "Mr. Lewis, the Shop."

"The Shop" contains every thing you can wish or desire, from a satin dress to a yard of tape; from a smooth black hat to a coarse straw bonnet; from the best green tea to the worst black; from wax candles to farthing rushlights; white sugar, and brown sugar, spice, and tobacco, snuff, coffee, pins and needles — in short, specimens of the contents of

half the London warehouses; our shop displaying more variety than is to be met with in any ten shops in the metropolis. There is a carpeted show-room at the bottom, where is a handsome mirror, in which the ladies may arrange their hats or bonnets, or take a sly peep to examine the general effect of their dress and faces.

Not that ladies are inclined to such vanities, as the position of yonder girl at the end of "the shop" will prove, who, with a number of hats before her, has placed herself with her back to the mirror, and does not even turn towards it, as she puts them one after another upon her head. Still if her face do not belie her figure she must be pretty; but the old man by her side and the shopman appear much more interested in the becomingness of the hats than she does. Let us take a nearer view of her. Pretty! yes, truly she is pretty; for it is no less a person than our friend Rachel, and the old man is her father. Poor Rachel! she looks as melancholy as the moon on a foggy night, whilst Jackey looks as obstinate and determined as a broad hot sun at noon day. And no wonder, for Rachel is going to service, and is very unhappy. In a few days the dreaded Hollantide fair will decide her fate, and separate her, for the first time, from her father and friends. It is market-day, and they are now come to "Town," to purchase a new hat and gown against the expected change; and Jackey looks quite wrathful at the utter lack of interest displayed by his daughter in the hats and patterns of flannels laid before her.

"Come, Rachel, come," he says. "Choose girl; put on the hats: look there, now, there's a glass, and you can see which suits you. The women, you know," winking at the shopman, "like to look well, for they are aware that they haven't much to recommend 'em besides their looks."

Rachel gently places a good beaver hat on her head; and her father, as he glances at her sweet face, feels a glow of pride, in spite of himself, kindling in his bosom.

"What is the price of that, now?" he asks.

"Fifteen shillings," is the reply of the shopman, who is looking admiringly at the pretty Rachel.

"Fifteen shillings! who ever heard of such a price!"

"Oh, it's too dear, thank you," says Rachel, taking it from her head: "I'll just try another."

"Too dear! I should think so, indeed," grumbles Jackey: "that's how you impose on us poor people, as if we had never seen a good hat in our lives: do you mean to say, now, that fifteen shillings is the lowest for that hat? Why it's more than a woman's worth, much less her hat."

"Couldn't say less, indeed; a capital hat! just look at it, now: soft as silk or satin; and I'll answer for its wearing well."

Jackey makes a peculiar guttural sound, to which he is accustomed when excited, and declares that "Mr. Lewis, as every body knows, has a dozen prices."

Without in the least wishing to detract from Mr.

Lewis the Shop's merits, I must be allowed to say here, that we country-folk love from our hearts a little bartering and beating down, and that, consequently, the shopkeepers are obliged frequently to set a higher price on their goods than they expect to obtain, in order to indulge their customers in this, their amiable weakness. By this means neither party eventually either loses or gains, and a great deal of pleasure is experienced, on one side at least; for a lady who carries home a dress at two shillings and sixpence a yard, that was originally offered at three shillings, rejoices greatly at her bargain, she not imagining it possible that two prices could have been put upon any article she, individually, was about to purchase.

Jackey is an old hand at a bargain, and "the shop" knows him well. He prides himself upon detecting the real merits of the article by the manner of the seller. Hat after hat is tried on, until the meek Rachel is almost tired; and, to make the matter worse, old Pally Lewis enters the shop, and joins most energetically in the discussion.

"What do you say to that, now, Pal vach?" exclaims Jackey, as he again places a hat on Rachel's head.

"Very pretty," replies Pally; "what's the price?

"Fifteen shillings: but *we* know better than that."

"Fifteen shillings!" screams Pally, with uplifted hands. "Why, when I was a young 'ooman, I remember I got a much better one for ten, and

that was the very hat I first seed John Lewis in, and he liked it so well that . . . . "

"No, no, Pally," interrupts Jackey, with a gallant air; "'twasn't the hat, but the face."

Pally almost gets up a blush, and smirks and smiles just as if she were sixty years younger than she is. Whether this little conversation has excited any woman's vanity in Rachel, and has made her consider that it is just possible that William, the corporal, may see *her* in her new hat, I cannot tell, but for the first time she peeps into the glass, and adjusts the border of her cap, really blushing the while, as if she were committing an indiscretion. The shopman's exclamation of "That's the nicest hat after all," calls the attention of the elders, whilst it tinges Rachel's face with a deeper crimson.

"Nice hat enough for eight or ten shillings," responds Jackey; "but not worth fifteen, nor near."

"Well, say fourteen," suggests the shopman.

"Nor fourteen neither: there's Mr. Lewis, and I'll ask him. I say, Mr. Lewis, do you mean to have the conscience to ask fourteen shillings for such a hat as that?"

"Oh, Jackey, is that you? I'm very glad to see you again," says Mr. Lewis the Shop, as he approaches and joins in the consultation; "fourteen shillings is the least farthing: why, it costs me thirteen and sixpence besides carriage."

"Well, you're all alike — like master like man: but I'll go to the Manchester-house where they sell hats dirt cheap; and if I can't get one there, I'll

wait till the fair, that's all." And with this resolution Jackey turns on his heel.

"You won't get one to suit your pretty daughter so well as this," interposes Mr. Lewis; "why, the hat was made for her. So, as I've known you so long, we'll say twelve shillings, and settle the business at once."

Jackey and Pally are seen to hold a consultation, the result of which is, that they declare the hat to be too dear, and that they will look elsewhere. As Mr. Lewis the Shop has now, in good earnest, named the real value of the hat, he stands firm, and unrelentingly declares that he will not abate another penny.

"Very well," grumbles Jackey; "then now, Rachel, look at the flannels."

Striped Welsh flannels are turned over, and after considerable deliberation and beating down, a black and red one is chosen, which Pally pronounces the most useful for service, and which Rachel appears to admire.

"Then you wont say less for the hat, Mr. Lewis?" inquires Jackey, as the trio prepare to leave the shop. "You'll never sell it at that price."

"No, never, I'm sure," adds Pally, emphatically. "The one I've got on now was only six shillings, just half, and 'tisn't so much worse after all."

Rachel can hardly restrain a smile as Pally takes her dirty old hat from her head, and places it by the side of the smart new one.

"There! that hat 'a seen more than the other, any

how; she 'a seen many's the corpse candle and many's the spirit."

The shopman laughs outright, and Pally, much incensed, pulls Jackey by the arm, whilst Rachel ventures to say, "Father, may we not as well give the twelve shillings and have done with it?"

"Hold your tongue, girl; you'll never be worth a farthing at driving a bargain, I'm sure. Come along —good day, Mr. Lewis," and full of importance, Jackey, followed by Pally and Rachel, walks out of the shop, fully expecting to be recalled, and to have the hat offered him for eleven shillings. He is, however, mistaken; so after walking down the street, and staring, for what he considers a sufficient length of time, into the shop windows, they go into the Manchester House, turn over a few hats, and leave it again, retracing their steps to "*the* Shop," where Jackey attacks Mr. Lewis with, "Well, Mr. Lewis, hats are cheaper everywhere than here, I find; but I don't like to change, as I have known you so long; ever since you were a baby, and your father before 'ee, so I'll take the hat. It suits the girl, too, or perhaps I shouldn't have had it after all, for I never bought any thing so dear before. I wonder you can have the face to ask twelve shillings for it, that I do."

"The greatest bargain I've sold to-day," replies the now inflexible Mr. Lewis, as he wraps the disputed hat in brown paper, ties it up with twine, and calmly receives the twelve shillings.

Pally purchases a yard of check for an apron, which, by dint of bargaining, she obtains for seven-

pence instead of nine-pence, and they all once more take their departure. Mr. Lewis slips into Rachel's hand two or three yards of pink ribbon, "against the fair," which she takes with a modest courtesy, and a half-suppressed sigh; for the mention of the fair brings sorrow instead of mirth to her mind.

The events of the past weeks have been full of moment to Rachel. She has refused decidedly, and with somewhat of her father's obstinacy, the hand of her red-haired admirer, even though he is the son of a respectable farmer, and will have plenty of money. She has given her father to understand, without at all meaning to do so, that she thinks William the very nicest young man in the world, and has been seen to shed tears when he talked of "'listing for a soldier, like his father before him." William has been more kind and attentive to her than ever, and in spite of the jeers of his mother, the insinuations of his sister, and the anger of his father, persists in visiting Jackey Bach as often as he can make an excuse for so doing. He is frequently obliged to put his ingenuity to the test to find one sufficiently plausible to gain him a civil welcome from Jackey, who has all but told him that he does not desire his society; still, like a true and constant lover, he perseveres, and has managed to hint to Rachel that his feelings towards her have assumed a different character from the one they bore when he and she played, as children, together under the old oak, and he filled her pinafore with its acorns. Jackey's penetration has discovered, or fancies it has discovered, the secret;

and after lecturing Rachel on the necessity of womanly obedience to the lords of the creation, he dooms her to salutary servitude. Rachel's tears avail nothing, but rather increase Jackey's obstinacy, and strengthen his determination. All the neighbours are grieved at the prospect of losing Rachel, and she has the pleasure in her sorrow of knowing herself greatly beloved.

Old Pally, as they walk homewards from their shopping expedition, endeavours to comfort her, and as they pass by the church she whispers, with a cunning look, "Who knows, Rachel, mayhap you and somebody we know will go there together yet." Rachel, far from feeling comforted by the hope thus expressed, is alarmed at discovering that her treasured secret — that secret which she has scarcely told even to herself — should be guessed at, and pretends to misunderstand the old woman.

"Don't be foolish now, Rachel," Pally continues, "I can see as far through a barn's door as another. As if I didn't know all about it. 'Twill come yet, so don't you grieve and fret, for 'tis no use trying to part them as are determined to join; 'tis like two oyster-shells, the harder you work to get 'em apart the firmer they stick together. Come you in to-morrow evening, All Hallow's Eve, and then ——"

The conversation is interrupted by the re-appearance of Jackey, who has been speaking to a friend, and they all three walk up the hill. They pause a moment to ask Mary Patch how her sweeping gets on — turn the corner — pass the market-place and school-house — and, leaving the town behind them,

once more come in sight of the mountains, with the Towey, full from the November rains, wandering amongst them. One moment, whilst Pally says something energetic, and puts her fore-finger upon Jackey's arm, they pause on their way. The youthful figure of Rachel contrasts well with those of the decrepit old crone and her sturdy-looking father. The "one word" uttered, they pursue their walk, and are soon passing through the turnpike-gate. We will leave them for the present, and follow this troop of Welshwomen, fresh from market.

How well they ride! they sit their horses as squarely and comfortably as if they were in an easy chair. No wonder that the French were alarmed into a retreat from the Welsh coast at the sudden approach of a phalanx of Welshwomen in their red cloaks and shawls. This steady old horse looks well laden, and certainly *is* well covered. Poor beast! the tips of his ears and of his tail, with a portion of his legs and feet, are alone visible on one side. In front sits a jolly farmer's wife, with a round face and a broad hat. Each cheek is armed with a very stiff cap, the borders of which nearly meet under her chin. A scarlet cloth cloak falls from her shoulders, and almost covers part of her steed; beneath the cloak a dark striped petticoat of coarse woollen material reaches nearly to the shoes, which are very substantial, and if they do not shape, at least protect the feet they contain. One hand indifferently holds the bridle, the other grasps with care a huge basket, evidently loaded with marketings. The dame disdains

a whip, or the horse requires none, as he jogs on at a steady untiring pace. Behind, on the same horse, sits a well-looking girl about eighteen, the age at which the Welshwomen mature into prettiness. There is more attention to appearance observable in her costume. Her rounded figure is shrouded by no cloak, but a neat crimson handkerchief is pinned tightly over her shoulders, and as the loose outer skirt of her gown falls back, it reveals a petticoat of fine material, striped with red. Open your eyes, O ye beauties of Hyde Park, and behold this rustic damsel sitting composedly behind her mother, on a horse whose paces, I should fancy, are none of the easiest, without even that ancient English accommodation for riding double, a pillion.

Look a little further up the road, and you will see a similar pair, the hindermost of whom has a baby on her lap, whose disposition is none of the quietest, for he claps his little hands with glee at every jog of the animal they are riding. Fancy these good people amongst the crowds of the great city — how they would stare and be stared at!

The market carts rattle fast down the hill, and then fall into a lumbering roll at the bottom of it. Dobbin jogs composedly along in his rough harness and huge blind halters, looking as if nothing could discompose him — not even a feed of corn. How refreshing is the merry peal of laughter issuing from the young people who have been "for a treat" with their father and mother to market! Who would have imagined that yonder rosy-cheeked urchin's

mouth could have contained the enormous piece of cake that has just vanished into it, and have received so speedily the sugary, slippery peppermint that succeeds it? As to the jolly mother, she would shame the most elegant of Marchionesses in the art of driving, as she vigorously operates upon the back of the imperturbable Dobbin. Two little boys hang on behind the cart, and trot along at the horse's pace, laughing loudly as they share an occasional touch of the whip with him.

In the rear come a number of steady-looking farmers on horseback, conversing together on the state of the times. From the grave aspect of their faces, I fear they consider them bad; but farmers are libellously reported to be ever discontented with the weather and the crops. One of them brings out a canvass bag, from which he takes a sample of wheat, and displays it to his companions with an ominous shake of the head. Another of the party, however, who looks a cheerful man, says, "Not so bad—not so bad; a pretty good price:" whilst the remarks of the others vary according to their individual success during the past year.

The sounds we now hear, proceed from a number of fowls, which are most uncomfortably tied together by the legs, and squeezed into market-baskets borne upon the arms of some country lasses. They are doubtless bewailing their hard fate to each other, in the most melancholy accents of which their language is capable, whilst their bearers are discussing new gowns and handkerchiefs.

"Nouf, nouf, nouf," grunts an old sow: "wee, wee, wee," squeaks a little pigling, as their tormentor, man, most unceremoniously holds them to their road. One pig-driver is evidently venting his mortification on the poor animal he conducts, as a return for his having found no purchaser. He gives many an unnecessary blow, though, to be sure, the creature, pig-like, never goes where he ought. A louder grunt and a strain at the cord which holds his leg, evinces his dissatisfaction, but does not amend his manners. Now he walks to the one side of the road, and now to the other; now he pokes his nose into the dust, and now, happy beast, has actually grubbed up an acorn from beneath an old oak. "Get on, you old sow you—you obstinate pig," grumbles the man, with a poke of his stick. "Nouf, nouf," grunts the sow, and seems inclined to turn back. His young companion the pigling is better off. *His* master has evidently just purchased him, and, together with his wife, looks upon him as tenderly, and drives him as carefully, as if he were their first-born son. "Poor little piggy," fondles the woman; "let out the cord a little, Davvy vach*," and the creature, conscious of being humoured, takes liberties accordingly. They certainly never will get past.

I would rather be any thing than a pig-driver. Yet I do not know. All drivers must have a thankless office, if we may judge from the man who accompanies the drove of cows in the rear. Still he

* Vach is a Welsh term of endearment.

looks contented enough, as, with his pipe in his mouth, and a long stick in his hand, he goes from side to side to urge on the solemn old cows and the unruly calves. They are passing through the turnpike, and as they are returning from a fair, whither they went yesterday, must pay toll. The gate-keeper and his wife, an active woman whose eye is as sharp as an eagle's, stand to receive it. "How many are there?" asks the wife — women are always the sharpest. "Thirty-four," is the reply. — "Oh! thirty-four are there; let's see — count you too, William. Four, eight, ten, twelve, — stand still there — fourteen, fifteen, nineteen — don't you drive 'em by so fast — twenty, twenty-four, twenty-eight — keep the calves still, do — twenty-eight, wasn't it? thirty — you're getting 'em on by the sly, but 'twont do — thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-four, thirty-six. Thirty-six; there's for you now, for a cheat: oughtn't you to be ashamed of yourself to try to deceive one so? But you're all alike. It was but a minute ago that a woman carried a little pig in her arms through the gate, and said he was weakly, all to save a half-penny. But I was too many for her. She put him down too near the gate, and before she was quite out of sight; so I runs after her and gets the toll: yes sure, you're all alike." Before the active little woman has concluded, the man has paid his toll, and has walked sulkily on behind his kine, whilst she turns to her husband, and assures him that "he is too easy by half, and that if it had not been for her, the drover would have cheated them."

One after the other the marketers disappear. I wish Gainsborough were here to sketch them as they wind round the corner after having mounted the hill, the cloaks dotting the road like a bed of scarlet lobelias. The sound of the wheels dies away, and the merry voices are carried onward by the breeze. The good people will soon reach their homes, and in displaying their purchases to those whom they have left there, will receive as well as impart gratification. The yard of ribbon for Janny, the cake for Tommy, and the little history of the little journey will give food for the evening talk, until, tired and drowsy, they retire to rest, requiring no appliances to —

. . . . "weigh their eyelids down,
Or steep their senses in forgetfulness."

No. V.

ALL-HALLOWS' EVE.

OLD festival days, with their games and merriment, superstitions and legends, which have gone or are fast going into forgetfulness in England, are still important and still observed in Wales. All-Hallows' Eve, so famous in Scottish and Irish story, is here no less celebrated, and its customs no less kept. It is the people of the locality and the soil, who are not worn into the smoothness of general society by intercourse with large towns, that devote themselves to these observances; and thus the labourers and the old women of the village are they particularly who expect and keep Hollantide. The latter have ever been the treasurers of the superstition and the legend, the devotees of usages which they deliver, with a faith that amounts to religion, to their children and grandchildren. As what are called civilisation and intelligence increase over the face of the country, these ancient observances naturally disappear; but whether a better faith and purer recreations succeed, I must not pretend to determine.

I am confident, however, that old Pally Lewis would feel her blood boil in her veins, were you to

seem to doubt one of the marvellous stories which she relates; things which, she says, happened either to herself, or to some near kinsman or acquaintance. She once turned away from me with disdainful indignation, because I incautiously expressed my scepticism at some supernatural occurrence. "What!" she said, "didn't I see it with my own eyes?" or "didn't they as saw it tell me of it? and dont I *know* it's all true?" With a Welsh expression of extreme displeasure she left me; and it has been with some difficulty, and not a little management, that I have been able to recover her good graces sufficiently to prevail on her to continue her tales of corpse candles, spirits, and All-Hallows' Eve sights. What Pally will relate in the following pages is not, then, the mere repetition of old stories for the amusement of those about her, but a detail of what she imagines to be facts in which she most firmly believes. How a belief so marvellous can have rooted itself in her mind concerning events in which she professes to have been herself a principal agent, I do not pretend to understand; but we know that it is a phenomenon in the superstitious temperament for which there is no accounting.

Old Pally, though a poor widow, would rather go without her dinner half the year round, than a "wassail bowl" on All-Hallows' Eve; and she is accustomed to gather all the young people of her vicinity about her own hearth on that occasion, who love a draught of hers better than of any other wassail bowl in the whole country. As long, then, as

she can replenish it, she is determined that it shall not fail.

It is All-Hallows' Eve; and twenty times during the day has every nook and corner of her little room been swept and dusted by herself and her grandchild. "There, child, there; clean up the hearth — make the place tidy," has been the burden of almost every respiration. All the crockery ware that she had purchased for her "staffell" has been washed and rubbed until it shines again. No economy of bees'-wax and oil to polish the chairs and tables: the clock looks brighter than ever clock looked before, and ticks impatient for the company. Evergreens are placed here and there about the room, as at Christmas; and the mantel-piece is loaded with the treasures of fifty years' fragmental china. Hosts of brass candlesticks and painted eggs are arranged to simulate with the fruit of the yew and ivy. All the day long the little grandaughter has been counting hours and minutes till the evening, and fearing that granny must sink before sunset under her extraordinary exertions. But when the twilight commences, her vigour becomes supernatural. The huge blue bowl is installed upon the table — the hearth is built up with logs — all sorts of curiosities and wonders leave their recesses, and bewilder the child's admiring eyes, who peeps under her grandmother's arms on tiptoe, as the mysterious cupboard is reverentially opened. What store of apples and raisins! — unthought of luxuries! — but I must not anticipate.

It is All-Hallows' Eve; and as All-Hallows' Eve

comes only once a year, Pally has determined to outdo herself in welcoming her friends and crowning the season. They have at last completed the saloon, and proceed to the labours that are necessary to bring their own persons into splendour. Granny soaps and scrubs the child's face until it shines and glows again, and then dons her best woollen frock. Pally's gown, and the starched structure of her cap, being lastly arranged, they sit primly down, and watch the clock and the weather: the former announces the speedy arrival of their visitors; and the latter, as it should, a blusterous night. The fire begins to blaze aloft — sparks shoot forth with a gladsome crack — the first knock vibrates on the door, and William, the young corporal, shows his handsome face. "Well, Pally," he asks, "who is coming to drink of your wassail bowl to-night?" Pally, with sly forbearance, enumerates some fifteen or twenty indifferent young people, but withholds the only name he pants to hear. He is sick with disappointment, and determines to leave as soon as he can with any propriety take his departure.

Poor William has left his sister at her fragment of a looking-glass, and run across to Pally, in the hope of finding Rachel, as is her custom, assisting the old woman to arrange her room; but she is not there, and he has not courage to question any further. "Tap, tap, tap" daintily at the door, and enters Miss Corporal, with a "for shame, William, to leave me to come by myself this rainy and dark night!" Another "tap, tap," and another and an-

other quick upon it, introduce Thomas Shenkin the tailor and his cousin Betto, a lean old maid, who has been withering on a marriage-engagement for twenty years, procrastinated till her staffell came up to the mark set by her disinterested lover. Gwenllian Morgan, the peach-cheeked daughter of a small farmer, attended by Rachel's red-haired admirer, Nat Lewis, who comes in the spirit of bravado, next appear. The nursemaid and housemaid from "The House" now concentrate all eyes, and create a sensation; whilst the footman, who escorts them in livery, looks as great as the Duke of Wellington suddenly stalking in at Almack's. By degrees Pally's one room is filled, and every chair receives its honoured burden of a Lewis, a Davies, or a Griffiths, but no chair sustains the Rachel. There is not a member of the party who does not regret her absence, and all but William and Nat are loud in their exclamations of disappointment. "Let us send for her," cry half a dozen voices at once; as many youths are on their feet, and William is at the door.

"No, no," says Pally, "she will come if she can; but you all know Jackey Bach, and if he take a thing into his head, it is no good to try to put it out."

Every one present, and especially William, feel this to be true; and all but he endeavour to finds amusement without Rachel.

Refinement will stare at the diversions of this rustic party, which Pally has arranged systematically in their presumed power to promote the mirth of the evening. In the first place, in the middle of the

room, suspended from the ceiling, hangs an apple, large and red, which ever and anon, as it receives a hint, swings temptingly above the heads of the party. Chairs and stools are pushed back, and the arena cleared, when, with all his agility, up jumps Nat, open-mouthed, and dashing at the apple encounters it with his chin, from which it indignantly rebounds, and, before his feet touch the floor, returns in vengeance upon his nose. A loud laugh, and a whispered "Nat's nose is getting as red as his hair," accompany this first essay. Another, and a taller youth succeeds to him; but not calculating well his height, jumps too high, and the apple is again triumphant. A third, as much too short as the foregoing one is too tall, gives a heroic spring, with his goggle eyes and distended jaws directed to the prey, but finds himself to his astonishment violently seated upon the floor, amidst the uncontrollable laughter of the whole party. Another, and another, unadmonished by defeat, rise to the trial, but the unscathed globe bounds upon their heads, eyes, chins, cheeks, noses, and even lips and teeth, baffling alike their prowess and their address.

"Come, William, come, it is your turn now; you will bring it down yet," cries Pally, as she observes William endeavouring to slide away. He replies to the call, but without feeling the least inclination to attack the persecuted apple, when a shout of "Here she is, here she is!" arrests him, and in glides Rachel.

All was now delight; and "Why didn't you come before? what have you been doing?" and a hundred

such kind of questions assailed her. Her father could not spare her earlier, she said, as her young friends took her umbrella, hat, and shawl from her, and told her to go by the fire whilst William tried to catch the apple. She blushed as William looked at her, and before the blush had vanished from her cheek, he had recovered his old love for All Hallows' sports, caught the apple dexterously between his teeth, and brought it down amid the shouts of the party.

"You wouldn't have done that a few minutes back," said old Pally, with a knowing smile.

After jumping for apples as long as apples could make them jump with joy, another and a yet more recondite diversion was proposed. A somewhat shallow tub, filled with water, was drawn into the middle of the room, and being hoisted upon two chairs, was immediately surrounded by the party. A sixpence was dropped into the tub; after which preliminary, in popped a head. Again it was Nat who made the first essay. He seemed determined to take the lead of the evening. His head remained under water as long as he could hold his breath, but soon and suddenly up came the red portent again, with nose and mouth evidently distressed to suffocation, but without the pearl for which it had dived. Nat shook his ears and wiped his carrots, which now paled behind his cheeks. Before the girls had recovered from their convulsions, another head was immersed in water. This was an adventurous and plashing poll, but much as it dashed about, it was up in a few seconds again without the

sixpence, but with a grin from ear to ear, and a "'Pon my word! I wonder how they do these things at the Polytechnic." This was the footman from the House, whose first attempt at diving was accompanied by peals of laughter. One after the other the youths struggled for the prize. Red heads, black heads, brown heads, heads of all forms and dimensions, were seen, first buried in the water, then withdrawn from it, exhibiting on their retreat, faces twisted into every conceivable contortion, but all looking most ludicrously good-humoured. William was the first to secure the sixpence, and having done so, he quietly slunk into a corner of the room where Rachel was standing.

She was thoughtful and abstracted, and did not laugh with the rest, at the sports that used to divert her, for her heart was heavy as she looked forward to the morrow. She felt, in the midst of merriment, tears steal into her eyes, but as she saw William approach, she hastily brushed them away, and smiled as she said,—

"So you got the first sixpence after all?"

"Yes," replied William; "will you take it, and keep it in remembrance of All-Hallows' Eve? and maybe, when you look at it, Rachel, you will think of this night, and will not quite forget him who won it for your sake."

The poor girl's heart was too full to allow her to reply, but the tear that left her eye spoke for her as she was about to take the little token.

"Wait a minute, Rachel," said William; and he walked to an opposite corner of the room where was

a shelf upon which Pally kept her knitting. A needle was peering forth from the straw-work of an old basket, and without waiting to inquire whether he should draw down Pally's anger by dropping some hundred stitches of her half-fininished stocking, he drew it out and returned to Rachel. He saw that every one present was still busily engaged with the sixpenny-hunt; so putting the knitting needle into the fire, he heated it red hot, and bored a hole through the sixpence.

"Now Rachel," he said, "you will know this from any other sixpence, and perhaps you will some day show it me again."

Rachel took the coin, and as she did so, she heard Pally declaring it was time to prepare the wassail bowl, and calling for her to assist. All was now bustle and laughter. The huge old chimney corner was crowded with seats. The place of honour—the large oak arm-chair—was reserved for Pally in the warmest corner, for she "couldn't sit down just yet." The grandchild's eyes glistened with delight, as she followed granny and saw the stores of buns, raisins, apples, spices, and elder-wine that issued from the venerated cupboard. The huge bowl was on the table, brimfull of ale. William held a saucepan, into which Pally and Rachel poured the ale, and which he subsequently placed upon the fire. Leaving it to boil, the party seated round the fire began to roast some of the apples that Pally had just put upon the table. This they effected by tying long pieces of twine to their stems, and suspending them from

the different "pot-hooks and hangers" with which the chimney-corner abounded, twisting the cord from time to time to prevent their burning.

It is astonishing how cleverly the party have contrived to seat themselves. Pally occupies her oaken throne, whilst Rachel takes her accustoned place, on a low stool, at her side. Next comes William: facing this trio, and endeavouring to look most fashionably unconcerned, is Nat Lewis, who divides the peach-cheeked farmer's daughter and Miss Corporal. Nat's cousin, Betto, is now blessed by her widower's presence, and sits simpering by his side in erect leanness. The young ladies in pink from the House have their attendant beaux, and the footman in uniform, makes himself vastly agreeable to all. Pally's little grandchild is crouched at Rachel's feet with the fine old black cat in her lap, and the rest of the party are all equally well placed. Every one is happy; even Rachel seems gayer than she was half an hour ago; so whilst the ale simmers, by way of adding to their merriment, they determine to withdraw the veil of futurity, and to ascertain who shall be alive next All-Hallows' Eve, and who shall be dead before it comes, with sundry other facts of equal interest. Every young man has his pockets full of nuts, prepared for the occasion, which he distributes to the ladies.

"Well," begins Pally, "let me see whether I shall be spared for next Hallow Eve."

She takes a fine smooth nut and throws it into the fire. She gazes at it with intense solicitude, until a bright blaze issues from it, when she exclaims, with a smile of delight,—

"Yes, we *may* reckon upon another merry meeting in these old walls."

The smart footman casts a nut into the fire: not a symptom of a flame. Pally looks grave, and lifts up her hands and eyes with ominous sadness. The footman takes it all very easily, and says,—

"Oh! never mind, maarm; if that didn't blaze, the next will," upon which he throws in a second nut, which soon emits a bright flame. Pally shakes her head, *experience* having taught her that the first nut is the certain test of life or death; and from this time she will never see the footman without feeling a presage that she shall never meet him more.

"Well! I shall have a wish," cries Nat, and looks across rather darkly at William and Rachel. He is too wise to tell his wish, but casts his nut silently into the fire. It moulders away without flaming; he looks disappointed and sulky, and begins talking to Sarah Davies, whilst Pally comforts him by assuring him that he will not have what he wished for.

"The wishes of the wicked never prospers," interposes the footman.

"I have wished," gaily exclaims William, and his nut blazes at once.

"You will have your wish certainly," says Pally; "and now, Rachel, try your luck."

William looks at Rachel whilst she thinks for a moment, and then throws her nut into the fire. All the party watch it earnestly, and many turn pale, as a longer period than usual elapses, and no flame appears.

"Dead!" cries Nat, with a pleased look.

"Alive!" retorts William, as a bright light at length appears.

"Better late than never," says old Pally; and so thinks William, as glancing at Rachel he meets her eye.

Each having burnt a nut with various success, they attacked the apples which remained unroasted on the table, and began peeling them delicately. The merit here lay in taking off the rind without breaking or cracking it, which Rachel, who is very famous for her apple-dumplings, effected.

"There! Rachel has finished first," said her friend and admirer Pally, who had been watching her: "she will make the most saving wife, for she peels her apple and takes off nothing but the bare rind. Throw it over your shoulder now, child, and let us see what letter your husband's name will begin with."

Rachel threw the apple-paring over her left shoulder, and every one rose to see what shape it would assume. It was an extraordinary hieroglyphic; but some declared it one letter, and some another, the majority deciding in favour of W.

"Let me see — let me see," cried Pally, as she made her way through the crowd.

Professing to be a profound scholar in apple-peel lore, she thought proper to consider the paring attentively for some time, having done which she pronounced it to be decidedly a W, "for there are two Vs joined together," she said; "one stroke down and another up, and another down and another up; and

everybody as can read writing must know that that's a W, all the world over." No one but Nat dared to dispute so good an authority, and he vociferated that it was more like an N than a W.

I cannot permit myself any more such details, but some threw Ns and some As, some Os, and others Cs; and some wondered what names X and Z could stand for, and were assured by Pally that those who got such out-of-the-way letters would never marry at all.

"Unless," interrupted the footman, "the ladies go up to London, where occasionally Mr. X Y Z advertises for a wife."

By the time they had all completed their trials the ale was boiling and the apples were roasted. The tempting beverage went smoking hot into the bowl, and was joined by the contents of a small, suspicious-looking, tightly-corked bottle, which I strongly suspect contained what the French call "water of life," and a very strong water it undoubtedly is. Next there was a hissing and spluttering greeting between the ale and the roasted apples, which was succeeded by the introduction of some of the "nices" with which Pally's table was covered. Different masculines of the party added to the treat by producing packets of buns, raisins, or biscuits, which they dropped singly into the bowl, until it was full to overflowing. With a sufficient proportion of spices and sugar, the wassail bowl was finally prepared, and, as if by instinct, just as it was completed, in popped three or four of Pally's ancient cronies, all dying to partake of it.

The cups and glasses were speedily filled, when William proposed Pally's health, which was cordially drunk by the whole party. After this preliminary, she was asked for some of her famous old stories.

Now Pally was in her glory. She sat in her high-backed arm-chair by the fire, like the queen of spells. Her thin shrivelled face looked out from a hedge of frill, and her keen grey eye twinkled strangely beneath her wrinkled brow, whilst a few white hairs hung straight over it. The black cat had leaped from little Mary's lap to that of the old woman, and added to her sibyl-like appearance. In truth, as she glanced from one to the other of her auditors, and stretched out her long, thin, bony arm to add force to her words, she looked supernaturally knowing, and would, had she lived some few centuries back, have been taken and ducked or burnt as a witch. It was just the night and place for tales to set the hair on end — rough and black without, with a bright fire within, to keep up the courage to hear the most fearful thing to its close. The candle was put out — for Pally never told her stories by candle-light — and the listeners were instantly fixed in profound attention.

"And what story shall I tell first?" inquired Pally, addressing the footman. "Perhaps, sir, as you come from England, you may never chance to have heard tell of the wonderful sights that some people have seen on All Hallows' Eve?"

The footman having replied in the negative, Pally thus began: —

"Well then, I will tell you what happened to myself some sixty years ago. You must know that we Welshwomen have got ways of finding out what we are most anxious to know, on this night, when the spirits and goblins are about us more than any other night of the year. As I said, some sixty years ago, I and two or three other young women sat up together, and waited for twelve o'clock. According to custom, we laid the cloth upon the table, turned the knives and forks and spoons all upside down; and every thing else that could be turned the wrong way, sure enough we turned it. When we had done this, we all sat down by the fire-light to watch. 'Tis a weary and terrifying thing to sit up late, as still as death, not daring to speak, turning your eyes from the clock to the door, and from the door to the clock, counting the minutes, and looking for a spirit till he comes. Perhaps *you* never did it; but 'tis an awful thing, as many here can tell. I never felt so strange as I did that night, before nor since, but once, and that was when I went to the church to hear who was called — but I'll tell you that by and by.

"There we sat, getting paler and paler, as the hand of the clock pointed nearer and nearer to twelve. 'Twas a very blustering night, just like this, and every time the door creaked with the wind I thought it was a spirit; but I remembered afterwards that spirits don't make a noise when they move about. But how the rain pattered against the window! The very panes seemed to answer it, and help to make it more terrible. And then the wind! — oh dear! I

thought the house was coming down about our ears. We waited and waited, shivering and shaking for fear, till the clock warned for twelve. I looked at my companions and they at me, but we didn't dare to speak, for speaking frights a spirit off directly.

"The five minutes ticked slowly away, and every tick went all through me, when twelve o'clock began to strike. I stared at the door, and before the clock had done striking, I saw the door move: yes — don't look as if you didn't believe me — I saw it move. That wasn't all, for it slowly opened, and then I saw a man's hand, and then an arm, and then a whole figure, — ay, don't look so unbelieving, Mr. Footman, you — a whole figure, and a very fine one too, whatever you may think. I should have screamed, but I was afraid; so I stared with all my eyes, for I couldn't help it.

"The spirit looked at me very pleasantly, and up he walked to the table, as plain as ever I saw anybody walk in my life. He turned every knife and fork, and spoon and dish, back the right way, whilst I was looking at him. Well, I shall know you again anywhere, thinks I. He had on a blue coat and yellow buttons, and a very smart frill to his shirt, with a collar and handkerchief as stiff as starch could make 'em; and he had brown hair, combed smooth and nice; and black eyes, and a nose and a mouth, and every feature quite right. When he had settled the table, he looked well at me, and smiled as agreeably as if he had known me fifty years; and says I to myself, I never saw you before, anyhow; I wonder

whether I shall ever see you again. I was so sure at last he was a real man, that I was just beginning to speak, when he vanished away, I don't know how. I looked at the door, and it was close shut, and then all around the room, but there was no man to be seen. There were the three girls, and the sight of them called me to myself, for I had never thought about 'em all this time. They hadn't seen any spirit, but said I looked so wild and strange, and stared so hard, they were afraid I was bewitched, but they hardly believed me when I told 'em what I had seen.

"For some time after this I went on thinking day and night about the fine young man; but as nothing came of it, I got tired of thinking at last, and began to fancy that All Hallows' Eve was no more than any other eve after all. But I found out that it *was* worth all the other evenings of the year put together; and I'll tell you how I found that out.

"One Sunday I and two of the girls that watched with me went to chapel. When I was there, I just chanced to look round; 'twas when they were giving out the hymn, for I wouldn't have thought of looking about me any other time; and what do you think I saw? Guess, now! — guess again!

Here Pally paused and looked exultingly around her.

"Not the man?" breathed the footman.

"Yes," resumed the elated old woman, "the very man! There he stood — the spirit, John Lewis himself! He was looking at me with all his eyes; and no sooner did I see him than he smiled at me just as

agreeably as he did All Hallows' Eve. I nudged my friend's arm, and says I, 'That's he.' 'That's who?' says she. "The spirit," says I; and sure enough there he was: blue coat, yellow buttons, frilled shirt, starched collar and handkerchief, smooth hair, black eyes, nose, mouth, chin and all. I see him now. Oh! he was a handsome man, John Lewis! I couldn't help glancing round at him sometimes, — how could I? And he was always sure to be staring at me. He went out of chapel first, and when I came out I found him waiting outside, and he began to talk to me at once quite natural."

"What! without being introduced?" interrupted the footman.

"Ay, to be sure; and what's more, before that day three months we were man and wife; and there never was a happier couple. We lived together nigh sixty years; and he has been dead, poor man, five years come next January; and all that story's as true as I sit here, and nobody knows it better than myself."

With this emphatic conclusion, Pally drew herself up and looked for applause, with as much certainty of obtaining it as a *prima donna*. The company, most of whom had known the story from the cradle, were quite as much delighted to hear it again, as if they had never heard it at all. And still more enchanted were they at the astonishment of the footman, who could not conceive how anybody "could *tell such a story* of her own particular self."

"Have you another, marm?" he asked.

"Oh yes, sir, fifty," Pally replied; "but let the wassail bowl go round first, and then I'll tell you one of them."

Her orders were promptly obeyed; the cups were replenished, and she resumed.

"You must know that some years agone, Mark Jones the sexton, and a friend of his, one Joseph James, who lived near him down at Llangathen, with ever so many other people, went one All-Hallows' Eve to hear who would be called. It was to the church porch they went, of course, and many a qualm came over them as they went there. I knew 'em all very well, particular Mark Jones the sexton, and Joseph James, and very good sort of men they were. 'Twas about half-past eleven when they went, and of a terrible bad night — a shocking night! it rained, and blowed, and thundered so, that they trembled all over as they stood in the cold porch upon the damp stones. And no wonder; for 'tis an awful thing to wait, and wait, and wait, in the pitch dark, to hear who'll be called, knowing all the time that whoever *is* called won't live till that night next year.

"Just before twelve there was such a heavy peal of thunder, that one of the women told me afterwards she had a good mind to go away from the porch; but she was more afraid to leave by herself, than to stay with company. She said 'twas just as if the thunder had come down from the sky, and was running all round the churchyard; and that as for the old church, it quite shook and trembled. When the

church clock struck twelve, there was another clap right over head, so loud that they thought there must be a thunderbolt falling. With it there came a terrible rush of wind, and when the first crash of the thunder and the roar of the wind was over, every body thought he heard a voice, but only two knew what the voice said, and they were Mark Jones the sexton, and Joe James his neighbour. They fell flat down upon the stones like dead men, and, as the thunder rolled over Grongar, and growled away into silence over amongst the mountains, they seemed as stiff and cold as corpses. The others picked 'em up, and brought 'em back to themselves again; but nobody dared to ask 'em what they had heard. 'Twas plain enough, however, that they had been called, for they never held up their heads after that night, and were sometimes heard to say, 'Oh! I sha'n't live for that;' or, 'I shall never see that day;' but they never talked about All-Hallows' Eve, and people had'nt the heart to question 'em.

"Over and over again I heard this tale from one and another of them as were in the porch when it happened, and *I* knew well that neither Mark Jones the sexton, nor Joe James, would see another All-Hallows' Eve, though there was some as laughed at me when I said so. Before it came round again, however, my words proved true, and the laughers laughed no longer.

"Joseph James was taken ill. He knew that neither doctors, nor nurses, nor doctors' stuff could save him, so he would have nothing to do with 'em. He

settled his affairs, and took leave of his friends, and told 'em he was going; and so indeed, after a few weeks' illness, he died. Poor Mark Jones the sexton dug his grave, and pitiful work it was for him. When he had finished it, he set to work again, and dug another by the side of it. Everybody wondered what he was about, but he would'nt tell them. "There," he said, when they were both done, "them are two as neat graves as ever I dug, but they are my last;" and so saying, he threw his mattock into one grave and his spade into the other, and walked home. He was taken ill the very next day, and before the week was out he died, having told his friends that he had dug his own grave, and they must bury him in it. And now, Mr. Footman, what do you think of All-Hallows' Eve? for that's as true a story as I sit here."

With this question, and a triumphant look, Pally concluded wonder the second; but the person she addressed, not relishing the appellation "Mr. Footman," merely smiled superciliously, and said "that it was a very wonderful story, no doubt, but he knew of one quite as extraordinary, or more so perhaps."

The whole party were delighted at the prospect of something new, and entreated the footman to let them have it. I must except Pally, however, who, offended at the proposal of another narration, before due wonder and admiration had been expressed at her own, preserved a dignified silence. Her displeasure was disregarded by her friends, in their eagerness to hear the footman's story, who, without waiting for a

second invitation, looked pleasantly around him, and, addressing, by turns, each member of the company, as a proper story-teller ought always to do, thus began:—

"There lived, somewhere in Herefordshire, a couple who did'nt agree very well together. Now I can't say whether this is a common complaint between man and wife, for, as far as regards myself, I should think it a matter of impossibility to disagree with any lady whatever, 'specially one's own wedded wife; but that there was disputing and quarrelling in this present instant, is certainly quite *voracious*. The worst of it all was that they actually quarrelled from morning to night, and half their time they did'nt know what it was about. Some said the fault was on one side, some on the other, but nobody could ever come to any degree of certainty upon that *pint;* for my own part I have no doubt that the gentleman was entirely to blame, as ladies are never in the wrong. Be this as it may, one All-Hallows' Eve this good couple took it into their heads, quite unknown to one another, to go to the church porch, and see if, by good luck, they could fall in with each other's ghost."

"What do you mean by that?" interrupted Pally, getting interested.

"Why, marm, you must know that our English spirits manage matters differently to your Welsh ones: instead of 'calling,' the ghosts of such people as intend to die before the year's out show themselves; and a pretty sight it must be, I should think,

particularly in a very *popolous* place. But to go on. A little before twelve o'clock at night, off set the husband, saying to himself, 'There would be some comfort in living another year with her, if one could be sure she would die before the end of it,' and, with this agreeable thought, he went on to the church-porch to wait. The wife didn't get there so soon, because she was rather long a putting on her cloak and mufflers, for, says she, though I may wish my husband dead, I don't want to die myself, so I may as well take care not to catch a cold.' I must tell you that the husband had been spending the evening out with some friends, and therefore the lady did not see him before he went to the church.

"It was a fine moonlight night, unlike most All-Hallow Eves, which are generally very rough and dark. It was striking twelve just as the wife reached the churchyard. She walked quick up the path for fear she should be too late, but she didn't want to go into the porch, for, as she came near it, she saw her husband's ghost, so she thought, standing right before her. She was quite satisfied, but being a little frightened or so, in spite of her joy, she took to her heels and was off like a shot round the corner of the church, and never stopped running till she got safe home again. Her husband, having seen her ghost as *he* thought, walked after her quite slow, feeling just as well pleased as she did, and taking time all the way back, to wish himself joy upon the happy prospect before him.

"When he got home he found his wife sitting by

the fire. She asked him where he had been, in such a good-tempered voice that he was quite astonished. He said he had been spending the evening with a wassail party, and he answered so kind that she too was taken by surprise, for she expected him to say 'What's that to you?' or something of that sort.

"Now they both made up their minds—to themselves of course—that, as they had so short a time to live together, they might as well pass it in peace and quietness; so they began to be agreeable-like, and, to the wonder of every body, never crossed one another, but lived like two turtle-doves. They never had so much as a word for near a twelvemonth, and, strange to say, when All-Hallows' Eve was coming round again, they both felt uncommon sorry. Instead of longing for the time that they knew must put an end to them, they grew every day more and more melancholy, and looked so down-hearted and dejected that they were asking one another all day long what was the matter. As both of 'em always answered 'nothing,' they didn't quite know what to make of it, but feared that 'twas some inward complaint that would cause sudden death.

"All-Hallows' Eve came at last, and never were there two more miserable creatures; for they were sure that, after seeing the ghost and all, before twelve o'clock had done striking they must bid farewell to one another. They both sat up, neither of them guessing why the other did so; but both watching the clock in the strangest way in the world, without saying a word. Ten and eleven struck—one hour

more thought they, — and then looked at each other with pale faces and tears in their eyes. It warned for twelve, and they covered their faces over with their hands. 'Tick, tick, tick,' went the clock, till at last it began to strike again. The wife screamed, and the husband groaned, and they thought it was all over. They didn't dare to look up for some time; but sat like two *statures*. Hearing nothing, however, they ventured to draw their hands away from their eyes to see what had happened. They looked up both at once — they wasn't dead! what a wonder! 'My dear! my love! my sweet!' they cries, and up they jumps. Then they fell a-kissing, and a-hugging, and a-laughing, and a-crying, and almost a-dancing for joy, until they thought they were both gone mad. When they had had enough of this fun, they began to ask one another what it was all about, and the wife — ladies are always the first to tell a secret — no offence! the wife let out all she knew, and then the husband all he knew, until they found it was their ownselves, flesh and blood, and no ghosts at all that they had seen that time twelvemonth. Then they fell a-laughing and a-kissing again, and declared it was so pleasant that they wouldn't care to go to the church-porch every year if the consequences were so uncommon agreeable.

"Though it was so late, nothing could serve 'em but they must make a jug of wassail to drink each other's health in, in doing of which the husband made a polite speech to his wife, and said that he considered that they had just been spending their honey-

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moon, and that, as they had begun to enjoy the sweets of matrimony after the sours, he thought it would be very foolish to return to the sours again; to which the lady agreeing, they promised one another a life all honey and sugar: and I was told by those as knew them, that never a drop of vinegar was known to enter their cup, but that ever afterwards they were the happiest couple in the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland."

It was now the footman's turn to look around him for approbation; and if unrestrainable merriment was a proof of it, he obtained it. The company were much amused, but old Pally felt that the story contained an insult to All Hallows' Eve, and looked offended accordingly. Rachel was quick to perceive this, and said at once, —

"Oh! Pally has better stories than that — *true* ghost stories, that are frightful to listen to: do tell us one, Pally vach! — that one about the goblins, or the corpse-candles, or the ghost, or ——"

"Any thing you please, my dear," interrupted Pally; "but I shouldn't think they'd do *now* —" and she laid an emphasis on the last word, and looked deeply injured.

Rachel persuaded her that they *would* do; so having replenished the bowl, and added fresh buns and spices, she began again, and gave, with considerable zest, a number of ghost and corpse-candle stories, which the limits of my sketch will not allow me to detail at length. Suffice it to say, that she had herself seen enough corpse-candles to last any woman a

moderate life-time. After enumerating some forty or fifty, she arrived at the last, which was the crowning one, and in keeping with her marriage tale.

"I was walking one night across that damp field over by the lodge," she said, "and all of a sudden I saw a light rise up out of the ground. My heart misgave me at once, but when it walked steadily on before me, looking just like a lighted candle, I was sure that somebody belonging to me would die. I followed it round the field a little way, and got my shoes and stockings pretty well wet, as you may think, when all of a sudden it went out. I didn't tell anybody about it; but when my poor dear husband began to complain of *rheumatiz* in the shoulder, about a week or so afterwards, says I to myself, 'Then he's going sure, and 'twas for him I saw the corpse-candle.' And so it proved, for he didn't live many months afterwards."

"Dear me, my good soul," said that determined spoil-sport, the English footman, "I dare say what you saw was nothing more nor less than a *hignus-fatus*, or a light as rises out of swampy places."

"I don't dare say any such thing," exclaimed Pally, again offended. "I knew what corpse-candles were long before you were born, and that was one, if ever I saw one in my life."

Rachel was again obliged to manœuvre a little, to induce Pally to tell "how the goblins led her a dance;" with which interesting narration the *conversazione* terminated.

"I was coming home," resumed Pally, "late from

a wash at the House with two other women, Betty Jones and Sally Morgans, when it happened. It was a lightish night, but very misty. I knew the goblins were astir, for we heard the noise of a rumbling of coaches and carriages, which, as you all know, is often heard at the House. We weren't much afraid, however, for we knew every inch of ground, and had walked it often in the pitch dark. We went across the park for shortness. There was a moon, but we couldn't see it or any thing else for the fog. We went on for some time merry enough, but at last we began to think that we had been a long while getting across the great field.

"'I wonder where we be?' says Betty Jones, 'for not a bit of the grass nor any thing else can I see clear for the fog.'

"'Oh!' says I, 'we must be by the gate going out into the road, and we'll come there in a jiffey.'

"So on we walks, stretching out our arms on all sides to try and feel the gate, but not a step nearer did we seem to get to it all the while. I've often thought if any body had come across us then, how they would have laughed. The very goblins themselves, that made such fools of us, must have been cracking their sides with laughing. We were feeling here, and groping there; sometimes falling up again one another, and sometimes stumbling upon the cows that were asleep on the grass, and frightening them and ourselves out of our wits. Oh! didn't we wish ourselves anywhere else, that's all? If we went arm in crook, or took hold of one another's petticoats, we

tumbled down upon one another, and if we let go, the goblins led us three different ways. Once we were obliged to take to our heels for fright. Two of the biggest eyes I ever saw in my life were staring upon us through the fog; and if they didn't belong to a ghost, I'm sure I don't know what they did belong to."

"A cow, perhaps, marm," humbly suggests the footman.

"A cow, for you, indeed!" indignantly replies Pally; "as if I didn't know a cow's eyes from a ghost's, as well as I do a corpse-candle from any other light. Oh! how they did look! large, and round, and fiery. And how we did run! We tried to keep together, but the goblins would as much let us keep together as find the gate, so we were soon I don't know where. I stopped to take breath, and found myself quite alone — not a sign of a creature near me. I gave myself up for lost, and began to think of sitting down upon the grass and taking my chance. But I changed my mind, and went wandering about for another half hour. All of a sudden, as I was holding out my arms to feel for the gate, bang I went against something that tumbled right into them. I screamed and it screamed; and what should it be but Sal Morgans. I never was so glad to see, I mean *feel*, her before nor since. Don't be offended Sal, for though I'm very glad of your company to-night, or at any time, I was much more glad of it then."

This latter part of the speech was addressed to an

old woman of the party, who was the identical Sally Morgans, and who looked very knowing, and said —

"Yes, sure, yes ,sure; I never shall forget that night as long as I live. Do you remember how we ——"

"Dear, yes," rather pettishly responded Pally, who never could endure an interruption. "As I was saying — where was I? — there, now, you've just put me out. Oh! — as I was saying, who should it be but Sal Morgans. We were determined not to let go of one another this time, so we went on, arm in crook again; and after a little while we felt something hard under foot. In another minute we tumbled up again something harder still, and then we put up our hands to feel, — what should we find, but the house itself. Yes, indeed! after roaming about good two hours or more, there we were at the very place we started from. The family wasn't at home, and the servants were gone to bed. We were obliged to call 'em up; and by and bye we got a couple of lanthorns to look for Betty Jones. There was but one man sleeping in the house, and we hadn't the heart to go away from him, so we all kept together, and said we'd walk straight across first. On we went, and no signs of Betty till we came up close to the gate we had been looking for all night. There, within a yard of it, lying down upon the grass, half dead with fright, she was. And 'twas ever so long before we could persuade her that we weren't the goblins. She had seen the two lanthorns coming on, and took them for she scarce knew what; so down

she fell in a kind of a swound. Just whilst we were wishing the servants good night, we heard a noise behind us. 'The goblins hav'n't done with us yet,' says I; when, all out of breath with running and calling, who should come upon us but my poor dear husband that's dead and gone. He had been to look for us, and had been served pretty much the same trick as we had. Dear me, I shall never forget that night! 'twas the awfullest but one I ever spent. But if I go on telling *claps* this way, there'll be no dance nor song nor anything else. Come, Rachel, give us a song, girl, and let's hear your pretty voice once more."

Pally having ceased, and received the thanks of the company, Rachel sang very sweetly an old Welsh song, which was succeeded by others from various musical amateurs of the party. The footman astonished the natives with one of the finished compositions from Jack Shepherd, which, I am happy to say, they did not understand. Indeed, Pally innocently inquired what language it was, for, she said, "although she knew English pretty well, considering that she hadn't been so very much with real English people, she had never in her life, to the best of her knowledge, heard a quarter of the words of that song."

The evening was to finish with a dance, and Pally had an unexpected treat in store. Jones, the harper, had promised to look in upon her on his way from town; and between ten and eleven he made his appearance. He struck up a gay tune upon his old

Welsh harp, and merrily they began to dance. A variety of evolutions were performed, partaking of the beauties of the Irish jig, Scotch reel, and college hornpipe. Amongst the dancers, our friends William and Rachel were conspicuous, as true heroes and heroines always are, and they both forgot the morrow in the excitement and pleasure of the present. Pally and the other old women looked on and applauded, and declared they could almost fancy the good old times were come back again. But every pleasure must have an end, and our merry party were sorry to find that time and the clock went steadily forward, when they would fain they had stood still. Another wassail bowl, another dance, a few well-beloved Welsh airs on the dear Welsh harp, and all was over.

But there was the fair to-morrow, and more pleasure was anticipated by all but Rachel. Many an assignation was made, and many a fairing promised, whilst everybody hoped it would be a fine day.

Rachel accompanied by William slipped away first. They had not far to walk, therefore little was said; but sometimes a great deal is conveyed in few words. William ventured to hint, that if Rachel would be a little obstinate, maybe she needn't go to service after all; but Rachel, who was a good girl, and a dutiful daughter, declared she would never go against her father's will in any thing, and that she was sure he knew what was best for her.

"But suppose——" began William, and hesitated.

"Suppose what, William?" inquired Rachel.

"Suppose he should insist upon your marrying somebody you didn't like?"

"Oh! he would never do that, William — and if he did — why ——"

"Why, what, Rachel? just say it out."

"Why, I *couldn't* do that, William."

"Only say you *would'nt* — just only say you wouldn't, *dear* Rachel."

"I do not think I would — but I am sure he will never ask me — no, he will never ask me."

Rachel felt she scarcely knew how at William's little word "dear," for it was the first time since their childhood that he had so addressed her; and as they stood for a moment upon the threshold of the door, she trembled all over. William held one hand, the other was on the latch of the door.

"One word — only one word, Rachel," he said; "if we could ever hope to get your father's consent, would you — could you think of me — would you promise me only ——"

"Oh!" falteringly, but hastily, replied Rachel, "don't ask me — indeed, I don't know — I mustn't promise any thing — it would be wrong — indeed, it would be wrong — but I will never think of any one else, William — no, never — good night, good night, God bless you!"

Before William could add another word, the door was opened, and Rachel disappeared.

No. VI.

HOLLANTIDE FAIR.

KNOCK after knock, knock after knock, strike the hammers, from six o'clock in the morning till ten, waking all the inhabitants of our town from their peaceful slumbers, whilst a long line of booths gradually arises, extending down the street and round the churchyard wall. Not a wink of sleep can be procured in such a din, worse than the noise of twenty blacksmiths' forges. But then, who cares to sleep on a fair day? Only the most apathetic people in the world, and as to them, why it is a very good work to awake them; so knock, knock, knock away, ye noisy, industrious souls, and let us have the pleasure of gazing, as soon as possible, on the finery which your booths will assuredly display.

It is fortunate that our High Street is broad as well as steep, or the double line of booths would be in danger of accidents from the number of people who flock to a Hollantide fair. Farmers, their wives, their sons, their daughters, their servants, and their cattle — labourers, and their families — shopkeepers — innkeepers — gamekeepers, and all other kinds of keepers *but* turnpike-gate keepers, who are fully occupied in taking toll — servants of every deno-

mination — children of all ages — in short, the whole population for miles round, crowd into the little town, and choke its streets. Some arrive at one hour and some at another, so there is a constant flux and reflux of people. But twelve o'clock appears to be the hour for a general gathering, and at twelve o'clock all is motion, bustle, noise, and confusion. The mingled sound of Welsh guttural and laughter arises out of a black stream of hats; for a bonnet is as rare here as a Queen Anne's farthing. Men and women, all much of the same height, and none of them children of Anak, sport hats of every shape and dimension, which form, as you look down upon them, a broad, black, and level surface. I can scarcely discover one tall figure amongst them, for they are a somewhat short, thickset race. They plod and stare along, jostling one another without respect to sex or person. They are merry enough, however, very unlike in this their unfortunate cattle here assembled.

Never did poor beasts look more out of place, or more sick and disgusted than the blackamoors ranged along by the churchyard wall. They stand upon the pavement, packed as closely as figs in a drum, and look with longing eyes at the grass on the other side. With their eyes half closed from fatigue, and their noses extended towards the herbage, they seem unable even to chew the cud, and are utterly heedless of the bartering and falsehood going on behind them. Their only diversion is a rub of the nose against the rough wall, or a poke from

their masters' or their masters' boy's long stick, at which they can only whisk a harmless tail: gin and gingerbread have no charms for them, and a bundle of sweet hay is a hopeless dream.

As to the buyers and sellers, who are the same all the world over, they buy as cheaply and sell as dearly as they possibly can, taking every means to dupe and overreach one another. You will see them haggle and separate, and then meet again; clap one another on the shoulder, look knowingly into each other's face, then on the ground, and finally shake their sticks at one another in a friendly-quarrelsome sort of a way.

How cunningly that short, sagacious-looking farmer, with his hat on one side, keeps one eye on his twenty cows and the other on the men who are examining them. With what a tone he says, "Fine beast that! fat I'll warrant him!" and with what a sneer that comfortable-looking brother farmer replies, "I've seen fatter by a deal."

"Dear now! say so, sir?" retorts the owner of the fat cow; "see the flesh there is about his bones."

"Humph!" is the pithy answer of the comfortable gentleman, as he passes on to another beast.

"Jack, mind the cattle," screams the master; at which a small boy rushes out of an opposite booth with a piece of gingerbread in his hand, and looks considerably alarmed as he begins to poke the twenty cows with a large stick by way of making up for lost time.

"You young rascal, you — I'll teach you ——"

are the words that attend his praiseworthy exertions; but the rest of the sentence is cut short by the speaker's perceiving the comfortable-looking farmer feeling another fat cow, which occasions him to change his tone and say,

"Ah! there's a cow for a show, sir! I'll back her against any cow in the Principality."

I almost think the comfortable gentleman decides upon purchasing the said fat cow, but the sudden sound of a bell makes everybody look round, to hear what the crier can possibly have to say for himself.

"Oyez, oyez; this is to give notice that there are pickpockets in the fair, and to recommend all who have money to take care of it."

In an instant every hand is in some pocket or other. Pocket-books and purses are eagerly felt for, and a grin of satisfaction is visible on a hundred faces when the filthy lucre is discovered to be safe. One or two pocket-handkerchiefs, however, are missing, and a sudden murmur runs up the street, importing a heavier loss somewhere. "Five pounds, five pounds," is the burden of the sound; and it is ascertained that a farmer has lost that sum. Poor man! there he is, looking woe-begone, and bewailing his misfortune. His circumstances cannot be over prosperous, if we may judge from his evident distress at the loss he has sustained. Alas! that our sister England should send her most depraved children into Wales to teach them the art of populous cities, as yet but little cultivated in this Principality, where robberies are few and far between. Poor man!

every one gives him a breath of pity, but no one is generous enough to attempt to replace his loss, which immediately passes from every mind but his own.

This is the world: the crier's bell is soon drowned in the drum and horns of the large yellow show, which surmount the din, and take attention by both ears. Who could resist that splendid painting which covers the whole front of the show, and exhibits a lady infinitely larger than life, and a gentleman infinitely smaller? Who but would "walk up" to see the two young ladies with pink eyes, long silky white hair, and skins whiter than the driven snow? No little boys and girls who have threepence in store, and few grown-up children who can spare sixpence, have courage to refuse their money for so tempting a sight. Besides, beautiful as is the picture, it is as nothing compared with the originals; the which fact the proprietor is anxious to impress upon his auditors by descriptive praises.

But the eloquence of this Demosthenes, great as it undoubtedly is, is much inferior to that of one of his cotemporaries, who stands a short way off exhibiting a penny peep-show, and whose oratory alone is well worth the penny which he modestly asks for his whole interesting exhibition. He is an ancient little man, with white hair, a thin, knowing face, small grey eyes, and a shabby suit of black. He speaks with no Welsh accent, and I suspect that, like the pickpockets, he is English. He stands flourishing a short stick, and addresses the admiring crowd around him with that air of modest assurance which

at once declares him master alike of his profession and himself.

"Now, my dear little boys and girls," he begins, pointing to six or eight round dirty glasses inserted in a large square box, which is elevated upon four legs; "now, my little dears! if you look into them small winders, you'll see prettier sights than ever you see afore. Fifteen shillings apiece them glasses cost me, and they magnifies every thing, that is, makes every thing look bigger, till what's inside becomes as large as life. Van Hamburgh and his lions as was here the other day is nothing to it: and you was obleeged to give him two shillings, whilst I only charges a penny. Only a penny! think of that, my little dears. Any other little boy or girl like to have a peep?—only a penny! As I was a saying, Van Hamburgh is the triumph of strenth, this is the triumph of hart, which means ——. Ha! now the glasses is full. Look well, my little dears: stand up a-tiptoe, my man, and you'll see as well as any body else. Now then! First, 'The Battle of Waterloo.' On the right you beholds the Duke of Wellington, and on the left that hawful great man, Mr. Bonypart. See how they fights 'and to 'and; see how their 'orses rears and prances, and see the poor dead creaturs lying round 'em. Some people declares that the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Bonypart never fought 'and to 'and; but, as I tells 'em, that very pictur proves the contrary, for aint they there in the very hact, as large as life.—Second. 'The burning of the two 'Ouses of Parlyment.' Ah! there's a sight!

See those two noble buildings with the red flames coming out of every winder. Only look at the fire! as natral as life. On the right you beholds a great many of the Lords with their wives and daughters, and on the left a great many of the Commons, all a bewailing the loss of them fine large 'ouses; whilst in the middle, as much as you can see of it for the smoke, is a big fire hengine, which is a harticle they uses to try to put out the flames. Oh, no! my dear,—the sky isn't a-fire, 'tis only that the blaze is so strong that it seems to burn the clouds; a very natral conclusion, my fine feller. Now look again, and look well! This is new—just come down from London; I only had it a few days ago, and this is the fust time of hexibiting it. On the right you beholds her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen! on the left you beholds His Royal 'Ighness Prince Halbert, and in the middle the royal hinfants. The Queen is a-looking affectionately at her children, whilst the Prince is a-looking affectionately at her, and one little babby is a-smiling at its papa, and another at its mamma. Isn't it a beautiful and tender sight, my little dears?"

The "little dears" continue to gaze admiringly upon a number of very fine paintings; but whilst we are listening with delighted attention to the showman's eloquent panegyric of them, one in whom we are interested is at hand, looking and feeling very uncomfortable.

Whilst the peep-show occupies the corner under the large chestnut tree, the opposite side, from the post-office to the hotel, is thronged by young men and

women, standing, like the cattle, in rows, to be selected for service. It is the custom here for such servants as are "out of place," to assemble at the Hollantide fair, whither those mistresses who require fresh domestics resort, to pick and choose from amongst them. The farm servants, and some of those hired into tradesmen's families, are principally the ones who come to the fair to seek for a place. When a servant is hired, the mistress gives her a shilling or half-crown, which is called the "earn" and when once "earned," she is bound to keep to her agreement, unless both her employer and herself are desirous of retracting from it. If a mistress discovers any objectionable point in the character she receives of her servant, even after having "earned" her, she can refuse to take her, upon which the "earn" is returned, and both parties are free. Once settled in service, however, the mistress and servant are bound to one another for a twelvemonth. If the mistress wish ever so much to part with her domestic, she cannot do so without paying her a twelvemonth's wages, and even in so doing she is liable to be summoned before a magistrate to give her reasons for dismissing her from her service. In the same way, a servant cannot leave her place under a twelvemonth, without both forfeiting her wages and being at the mercy of her employer, who can send, or cause her to be sent, to the house of correction for three months, and subject her to much annoyance. Of course any agreement can be entered into contrary to these rules, but they are generally adhered to.

The crowd of females now gathered together in one place, dressed in their best woollen gowns, best aprons, best handkerchiefs, and best hats, as well as the men opposite them, are anxiously looking about them, and hoping that every farmer or farmer's wife who approaches, will view them with a favourable eye. Amongst them is Rachel, who, though the prettiest and most modest girl of the whole throng, is, I fear, the least likely of them all to be selected; for who would choose a snowdrop when a good homely potato is required? There are scores of strong, healthy-looking girls, neither half so good nor half so deserving as Rachel, who are already "earned," and who, with their shillings in their hands, and smiles on their broad faces, are moving away to finish their day in the fair. It is true that many a master and mistress have penetrated through the front ranks to speak to Rachel, who has planted herself in the background, but no sooner have they examined her tall thin figure and delicate face, than they declare she will never do for hard work. One good-natured woman, who is acquainted with her, says she should like her very much, but that she is only fit to be a parlour-maid in some gentleman's family where there is little to do. Rachel blushes, and says "she would try her best," but the woman only smiles and shakes her head, and passing on, soon discovers a lusty girl suited to her wishes.

Jackey Bach has placed himself at a little distance from Rachel, and narrowly watches every person who approaches her. He half wishes, in spite of himself,

that no one may engage her, but is too proud to admit that he desires such a thing. The Corporal has got hold of him now, and assures him that if he sends Rachel to service, she will not live over her first year.

"Hav'n't I seen enough of women at home and abroad to know what they can bear? Why, there was our sargent's wife, just such another as Rachel, and near about as good—well, she died from being over worked, and she wasn't half so delicate as your girl neither, and didn't do as much as most farm-servants have got to do, for it was just once in a way that the women were obliged to wash after several days' long journey, and she was forced to help. Poor soul! she went beyond her strength, and if you don't take care, that will be the end of Rachel."

The Corporal's interference is alone sufficient to steel Jackey's heart against the emotions of paternal tenderness which were trying to find admittance, and he only answers, as he walks away, "I know what's best for my girl better than you do, so you may as well mind your own business."

There is another of Rachel's acquaintances not far off, who, perhaps, feels more than any one else the unpleasant position in which she is placed. This is William, who, ensconced in a corner of the street, watches all that passes, and with his eye fixed on Rachel is ready to rush forward at every word that is addressed to her. One after another the girls who have hitherto shielded her, drop off, and she is left with the few who have been, as yet, unsuccessful in

obtaining mistresses, and who linger on in the forlorn hope of being "earned."

But whilst Rachel stands there, half exhausted by fatigue, the scene before her is perpetually changing, and might amuse any person less inclined to sorrow than she is. Now a vender of stay-laces passes by, whose face alone is comic enough to excite a laugh, whilst his words and goods are still more ridiculous. Tied to the extremity of a thin pole, twice as high as himself, is an enormous bunch of worsted stay-laces, which he flourishes in all directions, far above the heads of the multitude. Fastened to his shoulder, in form of epaulette, he wears a packet of black boot-laces, which do not seem to occupy the attention either of himself or his customers. Unceasingly he cries out, "Now ladies! now for a bargain! Fine stay-laces, ladies! fine long stay-laces! Three yards long, and only a halfpenny! Won halfpenny ladies, and no more!" Again he exclaims, with a jocose smile, as half a dozen of the "ladies" stop to examine his goods, "Try them, ladies — ah, ah! pull away; pull all of you ladies! they wont break, pull as hard as you can. Only a halfpenny; three yards long, and only won halfpenny!" This halfpenny is irresistible, and I believe there is scarcely a "lady" in the fair who does not carry home one of those stay-laces, "three yards long, and all for a halfpenny."

What grotesque figures are to be seen on all sides! On the right is a man, standing behind a long line of board, selling hats. His head is covered by a yellow

pocket handkerchief, the corner of which falls gracefully over the collar of his white great-coat, and is surmounted by a hat. Surrounded by men and women, most of them bare-headed, he calmly smooths the fur of one hat with a velvet pincushion, whilst his customers try on others, looking perfectly unconcerned the while at the abuse they lavish upon his goods. How charming is the exultation of that cherry-cheeked boy, who stands beneath the admiring gaze of his father, with a new hat upon his head, and his old one tucked under his arm! How happy and proud he looks! This is evidently a well-frequented stall, as the occasional envious glances of a rival female hat-vender opposite testify.

Every thing is to be procured at a Welsh fair. Here is a grand display of crockery-ware — there a booth in which Welsh flannels of every grade are exhibited. Here smart be-ribboned caps attract the smirking damsel — there shoes of all shapes and sizes invite men, women, and children. Here is an umbrella stand, and there sits a fat short woman selling gingerbread behind a piece of board. Booths for finery, booths for use, and booths for eating and drinking, are to be seen, all in their turns calling the attention of the different visitors.

But we must return to the patient Rachel, who still stands where we left her, scarcely conscious of the scene that is passing around her. Perhaps she looks darkly into the future, and sadly upon the past, as many have done before her, for when a first sorrow breaks upon the mind, it overwhelms every hope of

the present, and wholly shuts out from the mental eye the many vistas of happiness that may be opening beyond its immediate view. Poor Rachel's "first grief" was very heavy for her to bear, and as she stood alone amidst the throng by which she was surrounded, she gave vent to those gloomy anticipations of the future that crowd so thickly upon the heart when sorrow has oppressed it. She was interrupted in her reverie by a squeaky man's voice which asked her what her name was. She started as she replied that it was "Rachel Lewis."

"Oh! and where do you come from?" pursued her interrogator, who, when she had informed him of her place of abode, said, with a voice of pleased astonishment, "Sure you ain't the daughter of Jackey Lewis — Jackey Bach, I mean?"

Rachel, having answered in the affirmative, found herself suddenly seized by both hands, and attacked with a volley of inquiries concerning her father and herself, to which she replied by pointing out Jackey, who stood at a little distance, and who came forward to meet Rachel's newly-formed acquaintance. The two old friends — for such they proved to be — shook hands with the utmost warmth, and no sooner had they concluded shake the first than they began shake the second, after which they patted one another on the back with much affection.

"Well, Jackey *Bach*, still, I declare," said Mr. Shenkin, which was the name of Jackey's friend.

"Oh! don't *you* talk, Tommy *Bach*," retorted Jackey, "for you know it was always a question

which was tallest, you or I. So you've been fool enough to get married again since I saw you this time five years. I thought you would have known better than that — and you've changed house lately, too, I hear, and are come to live nearer your old friends, down by Grongar. I've been thinking of going to see you, but then you've got a woman again, and perhaps she's like the rest of 'em, disagreeable enough."

Mr. Shenkin smiled, but looked fidgetty, and seemed not to enjoy the subject.

"So that's your daughter," he said. "A nice modest-looking girl. I was just searching for a servant for my wife, and she took my fancy directly, so I asked her who she was, and found out that she came of no worse a stock than my old friend Jackey Lewis."

"Say so!" ejaculated Jackey: "come along with me, and you shall know more of her."

The two little men walked across to Rachel, and Mr. Shenkin professed himself quite willing to take her, provided his wife approved of her. Jackey turned up his nose with a sneer, and asked "if he was become such a fool as to care whether any woman under the sun liked what he did or not."

"Oh — ah," drawled Mr. Shenkin, "of course — I — I — I don't particularly care — that is to say I am not afraid; but perhaps my wife may think her too slight or so, for you know there's never any knowing a woman's mind, don't you see?"

"Who cares to know it? Do what you like your-

self is my way," grumbled Jackey; "but take her or leave her, just as you please — now or never: I shouldn't mind trusting her to *you*, because I know you'd be kind to her; but as to your wife, why, as I never saw her, I certainly can't tell *her* mind, and as *you* don't seem to know it yourself, why I suppose, if I *had* seen her, I shouldn't be much the wiser."

Mr. Shenkin evidently had his fears, but he was ashamed of acknowledging them to his friend; so after sundry hems and haws, and inquiries as to what Rachel could and could not do, he said that he thought she might suit very well, and that down under Grongar Hill she might chance to get more colour into her cheeks, and look more hearty than she did now."

"Yes," said Jackey; "but, as you've got another servant, I hope she wo'n't be worked very hard, and that your wife will be kind to her."

"Oh dear, yes, to be sure!" replied Mr. Shenkin; "any friend of mine — I hope she'll do, however, for, to tell truth, my wife's rather particular."

Jackey was getting angry, and said with great heat, —

"Why, Tommy — Mr. Shenkin I mean, I beg pardon — haven't you known me all your life, and I tell you, though I say it as shouldn't say it, that there isn't a better or more respectable girl in the country than my Rachel; why she's one of a thousand, as every body that knows her will say — but I see who's master at Grongar: didn't used to be so when poor Mary was alive, and you lived hard together."

"Oh dear!" involuntarily sighed Mr. Shenkin; but

recovering himself, and assuming a dignified air, he assured Jackey, with majestic composure, that "nobody was master at Grongar but himself;" to prove which he pulled out his purse, and taking half-a-crown from it, presented it to Rachel, and hoped she would consider herself "earned."

"A shilling's enough," interposed Jackey; "I'm sure if your wife don't like your choice of a servant, she wo'n't like your giving half-a-crown to earn her."

Mr. Shenkin persisted, and seemed much offended by the refusal; but Rachel said she would rather take the customary shilling, and so it was settled. Jackey was so well convinced of the kind heart and friendship of his old crony Tommy, that it never occurred to him to make any particular arrangements concerning Rachel's future position. He took it for granted that Mr. Shenkin would make her comfortable, and treat her as his own daughter, so he thought he might leave matters as they were. As to Rachel, she was merely a passive instrument in the hands of her father and his friend, for it was immaterial to her whither she went, since every place but her own little cottage seemed equally disagreeable to her. When the wages were mentioned, Mr. Shenkin tremblingly hinted that he should prefer his wife settling that point when she saw Rachel, as she would be the best judge of what it was proper to give. To this Jackey agreed with a shrug of his shoulders, and telling Rachel that she had better go to look for Pally at Betty Tock's, and return home with her, whilst he went with Mr. Shenkin to talk over old times, the

two little friends walked off together. Rachel stood for a few moments looking after them, thinking what an extraordinary being her new master appeared, and wondering whether his wife were like him.

Truly he was a singular looking man, so short and thin that you would think he had been first starved and then whipped. All his clothes were too large for him. His blue coat hung loosely about him, as did his other garments, particularly a pair of leathern gambadoes, which ornamented his lower extremities. Over his small pinched face slouched a huge hat, which seemed as much intended to shield the bridge of his nose as his head. A very thick blue handkerchief was folded loosely round his neck, so as to conceal his chin and mouth, and to occasion his weak shrill voice to proceed, apparently, from some one of its innumerable folds. What with the hat and handkerchief, little of his face was visible but the end of a long red nose, which looked painfully cold as it peered out from between this Sylla and Charybdis. He was constantly looking round, as if he expected to see some one behind him, and his whole manner was that of a man in perpetual fear. Rachel did not think he could be an ill-tempered person, for he seemed kind and friendly; so she consoled herself by hoping that he would be a good master in spite of his unprepossessing appearance.

Just as she was beginning her walk to Betty Tock's in search of Pally, some one called her by her name, and turning round, she perceived William at her elbow. After a short greeting, he begged to be

allowed to make a passage for her through the crowd, to which, with some hesitation, she consented. Although it is general for the beaux and belles at a Hollantide fair to walk arm in arm, William did not venture to propose such a proceeding to Rachel, having an instinctive knowledge that she would dislike it; they consequently made their way separately, he acting as guide and guardian to his timid companion. When they reached Betty Tock's *one* room, they found the door locked, and neither its mistress nor her friend Pally visible. There was, then, no alternative but to search for them in the fair. William was delighted to propose this, but Rachel was not so delighted to accede to it, since she feared meeting her father or some members of William's family, knowing that the one would be displeased at finding them together, whilst the others would spare no pains to make it known. They proceeded, however, and were not long in discovering Betty Tock, sitting on a stone step selling apples and cakes.

"Well, Betty, how do you do?" began Rachel: "have you seen Pally Lewis? and where do you think she is?".

"Oh! Rachel, is that you? Thank ye, I'm as well as a poor old soul just ninety can be — almost in my grave, and all the nearer to it because there's no getting the parish to pay my allowance as they ought. These are bad times for poor creatures like me; but I shan't be here long to trouble 'em."

At this point — the general conclusion of the active

old woman's discourse — she drew the sleeve of her gown across her eyes, an operation which she never failed to perform at the words "here long," and by which she gave her listeners to understand that she was "wiping away a tear."

"Have you seen Pally to-day, Betty?" repeated Rachel.

"Oh, ay, I saw her just now; but she said she must go and look for you, because your father told her to see to you."

"Dear me, we shall never find her in this crowd," said Rachel, looking timidly at William.

"Never mind, Rachel," replied William, "I will take care of you, and see you home safe. I dare say your father is gone back to his work, for you know he never stays long at a fair, and I don't suppose he would have been here to-day at all, but for you."

"No, thank you, William, I would rather find Pally; so I will go and look for her. Good bye, Betty; I hope you will soon get your money;" and so saying, Rachel, followed by William, walked up the fair.

They stopped for a few minutes now and then, generally by William's desire, to examine the different objects that presented themselves. Not that they could have remembered the next moment what they had supposed themselves to have been looking at during the passing one; for William said so much, and Rachel listened so earnestly, that ears and tongue rather than eyes were the occupied members. Not all Rachel's anxiety to find Pally could

withdraw her attention from William's eloquent discourse; and the colour quite mounted into her cheek as she recollected that Pally might have passed and repassed her twenty times without her having been aware of her proximity.

They stood for a short space before a booth in which was displayed finery of every description. Gold, silver, and precious stones sparkled on the board, upon which many a young man and maiden were feeding their eyes and hearts, but which were unheeded by William and Rachel. They were startled from their conversation by the woman who kept the booth, and who, remarking their earnest manner, had drawn her own conclusions. She touched William's arm, and pointing to a box of wedding rings which was conspicuously placed, "All sizes," she said, with a knowing look, "even small enough for that little finger." William shook his head at the woman, and glancing hastily at Rachel, saw that she had turned away and was moving on. They both felt much embarrassed; but happily for them they were greeted by Pally's well-known voice, and soon saw her ancient figure standing before them. She had adorned her hat with three small candles, which were stuck, in a careless manner, into the ribbon that surrounded it, whilst a new red whittle was thrown across her shoulders.

"No wonder there was no seeing you," she exclaimed, as she approached Rachel; "here have I been a wild-goose chase after you for the last half-hour, with as much chance of finding you as one has

of finding one's way when the goblins are about. Indeed I don't know whether it wouldn't be better to be led a dance by them, than by two such giddy young creatures as you."

"Really, Pally," interceded William, "we have been looking for you every where; but you have been buying smart whittles, so no wonder we couldn't find you!"

"Looking, indeed! pretty looking!" retorted the old woman. "I saw how you *looked* down by the standing below there — 'twas at one another, I think — but no matter, 'tis no good talking. Rachel, your father's gone home, and you and I are to follow soon. I must just buy some needles of Cotton Ball, and then I'm at your service."

The two proceeded to a long board, where a woman was measuring out tapes and shoe ribbons with wonderful velocity, and selling cottons, pins and needles to a variety of customers. This was Cotton Ball, another of our Welsh worthies, of whom more in her right place. Pally discovers with great indignation, that her packet of needles is rusty, but they are changed in a second, and they leave the stall.

"Now, Rachel, girl," cries old Pally, as they approach the place where a quantity of china and ware is displayed for sale, "here's a place to buy for your staffell. Look at those jugs! do you think I could have passed them by when I was your age? and thinking of getting married? There's one, two, three already that I should have bought I'm sure. But, look! isn't that Mary Patch getting a new pair

of shoes from Miss Thomas, who gives her a pair every year?"

Pally walks across to the shoe stall, where Mary Patch is taking care of her own interests most amusingly, and telling the kind young lady who stands beside her, that "the man always cheats her of her leathers (strings) if he can. The purchase made, she looks admiringly at her feet, and with a bob and a "Thankee kindly, Miss," quits the shoe-stall and joins Pally.

"Here's a street!" she begins. "Here's work for me to-morrow! I've got plague enough to clean after them nasty boys and girls, but that's nothing to sweeping after a fair."

Mary Patch moves on, but her "nasty boys and girls" do not think of her street to-day. They are all joy and happiness — all rich in cakes, gingerbread, or toys, whilst even the poorest forget their daily privations, and return to their wretched homes to display with delight a "Hollantide Fairing." William's generosity has furnished Pally and Rachel with one also, the former being presented with a smart red handkerchief, and the latter with a pretty green housewife, alias, a needle-book, pincushion, bodkin-case, thimble-case, &c., all comprised in a small space, and intended for good workwomen's pockets.

Having remained a short time longer in the fair, the three friends proceed homewards, and it is astonishing how many acquaintances Pally contrives to

meet, and how adroitly she leads them into conversation, so as to give William and Rachel the power of making the most of their time. I am sure no one would care to know what they said to each other, still I must mention that William, having learnt that Rachel's fate was decided, rivalled many a more finished lover in expressions of sorrow, and declarations of constancy. He would fain have extracted a promise from her, although he scarcely knew what promise he wished to obtain; but she remained firm to her resolution of never acting contrary to her father's will, and she knew too well that it was worse than useless to endeavour to change his determinations. The conversation ended, as on a former occasion, by Rachel's avowing that she liked no one so well as William, and that, as long as she retained her present sentiments, she could not marry any one else; but she would neither consent to a secret engagement, nor even to a secret meeting; she was not sure that she was acting properly at that moment, in allowing him to accompany her home, and address her as he was doing.

"The Almighty," she said, "knows what is best for us, and he will bless us, whatever our trials may be, as long as we keep free from deceit and guile, but I am sure we put a very heavy load upon our conscience when we begin any underhand ways; so please, William, not to ask me to do any thing which my father may not know of. I have always lived with him without keeping an action or even a thought secret from him, and now I am going to

leave him, I will act just as if he were by my side — honestly and openly."

William had neither the courage nor the inclination to urge her to quit the straight-forward path of duty; so he only looked sorrowfully into her face, sighed and said, —

"You are right, Rachel, you are always right; yet I wish — oh, how I wish your father would change."

Rachel from her inmost heart wished so too; but she did not speak, though a tear started into her eye. Rachel Lewis was a weak and delicate creature in body, but though only a poor cottager, she had an innate firmness of mind, and an exalted sense of duty, that would have graced many a high-born lady. It is by stability of principle, and resisting all temptation to dissemble, that a woman can best maintain her dignity and her cheerfulness; let her once admit secrecy and duplicity into the sanctuary of her bosom, and her peace of mind is no more.

No. VII.

A FARM HOUSE.

ALL who have ever heard of Dyer, the poet, must have heard of Grongar Hill, which he has elaborately attempted to describe, in a poem that is almost the only one of his productions generally known. It is my purpose to follow Rachel and her father in their journey towards Mr. Shenkin's farm, and to introduce them and my readers to Rachel's future home and Grongar Hill at the same time.

It was scarcely day-light when the father and daughter left their little dwelling: the former had a small box slung across his shoulder, whilst the latter carried a bundle in her hand. Jackey was an early man, and he wished, if possible, to begin their long walk before the neighbours were astir, to avoid the delays which a second edition of the previous evening's leave-takings would occasion. They set out, therefore, almost before the sun had begun to show his face, having breakfasted by candle-light. The morning was damp and cold, and served to depress, rather than exhilarate, the animal spirits. Rachel lagged behind her father as they walked through the village, to let the tears that would start, in spite of her efforts to repress them, flow unobserved

by him. She knew that she was not going away for ever — she knew that her future abode was not very far distant — she said within herself that she was a foolish girl — that it was quite time for her to be doing something, and to cease being a burden to her father — that she had no doubt she should be very happy with her father's friends — and with a great deal more such philosophical reasoning, she attempted to stop up the source of her tears; but it was all in vain. One big drop succeeded another, and, as she looked back for the last time upon her humble cottage, dimly visible through the murky atmosphere, they gushed so fast, that it was with difficulty she prevented the swelling sob from bursting forth upon her father's ear. None of her friends were visible as they passed along, such as had risen being engaged within doors. She felt a chill of disappointment at not seeing William's figure darkening his doorway, and thought that he certainly *might* have been there to give her, at least, one parting word.

A little beyond the village the figure of a man was observable in the distance, sauntering along with some workman's tools over his shoulder. "Who is that?" said Jackey. Rachel looked up, and the feeling of disappointment vanished, whilst the pulsation of her heart quickened. They overtook the object of their speculations, who turned round and proved to be William. Strangely enough, he *chanced* to have employment as a carpenter, for such was his trade, at a house distant about a mile or so from the village, and situated on the road which Jackey and Rachel were

travelling. He could not possibly avoid joining them and walking with them, much as Jackey was displeased at his appearance. He insisted upon relieving his old friend of the box he carried, to which, after some hesitation, Jackey consented, taking the bundle from Rachel in its place. Little was said by any one of the party, and that little principally consisted in remarks made by William, which elicited short, caustic replies from Jackey in return. Rachel kept by her father's side as they walked on, and, by the time they had crossed the park, and gained the narrow lanes which succeeded it, she had contrived to dry her tears. In summer the walk through these lanes is very pleasant; but, in November, when there are no green leaves or hawthorn on the hedge-rows, and when you have to wade, ankle-deep, through the mud, it is not so agreeable.

Before reaching the house at which William was to take his leave, there was a little bridge to pass, under which ran one of those numerous streams which are so clear and picturesque in Wales. The November rains had swelled this little brook into a torrent, and it rushed across the road, bubbling and foaming with considerable force and rapidity. The bridge, which was elevated much above the stream, was one of the most rickety structures imaginable. Three or four poles supported several uneven planks, roughly and carelessly joined together, not level, but sloping from the middle on either side towards the bank. There was a railing on one side only of the planks, which was less secure, even, than they; and

as the water came boiling down from its source in the hills, the whole fabric shook, and appeared to give way. There was no means of getting over the water on foot but this bridge, and the little party stood still to ask one another how they could possibly cross it. William took the box and bundle in his hands, and, despite the rocking movement, which responded to every step, deposited them triumphantly on the other side, and returned to his companions.

"You had better go next, Jackey," he said, "and I will see to Rachel, for the bridge will never bear you and her at the same time."

"Umph!" ejaculated Jackey, "then how is it to bear *you* and her?"

"Oh! we're lighter by a deal, and I'm used to it," was the reply; so Jackey, who was *not* used to it, mounted the first plank, and after sundry exclamations and slips, managed to get across. William had now the infinite satisfaction of walking backwards across the frail fabric, and holding Rachel's hand to aid her progress, to the danger of their both falling into the stream beneath them. There was certainly excuse enough for procrastinating the last few moments they were together, and William availed himself of it to the full. Here a dangerously loose piece of board made him pause to consider where Rachel had better place her foot to avoid it; there a particularly slippery plank occasioned him almost to lift her across; and here again an aperture of some breadth was the cause of their coming to a stand-still. During these proceedings William found time to

whisper to Rachel, that "he was sure Jackey would relent, and would let her come back before the first month was over."

"Well," said Jackey, "with one of his significant shrugs, "light as you are, and *used* as you are to crossing the bridge, you seem to be a long time about it."

"Oh! we're over now," responded William, as he lifted Rachel from the bridge to the ground, "and very well we've managed too, considering how slippery it is."

"Uncommon!" was Jackey's reply, given in his most sarcastic manner, and on they went.

All pleasures must have an end, even those that are mixed with pain, and a few moments saw William leaning against a gate, and straining his eyes to catch a last glance of Rachel, as she turned a corner of the lane and proceeded, with heavy heart, towards the scene of her first servitude. Jackey gave her some good advice as they walked on, to which she listened as attentively as she was able, and to which she replied by assuring him that she would do her best to be useful and well-behaved; "but," she added, "it is for you I grieve, dear father: you will be so lonesome o' nights — these long winter nights, too, without a soul to speak to, or to get you your supper, or to read to you, or——"

"Now hold your tongue, there's a good girl, or you'll make a fool of your old father—you'll make a woman of me, and I'm the last man in the world as would like that. I shall do very well, and you'll get

leave to come and see me sometimes, perhaps; so cheer up, girl, and don't be down-hearted."

They had some distance to go before they reached the farm, after parting with William, and Rachel became much fatigued. Although she had been born and bred about five miles from Grongar Hill, she had never visited it, and when, from a gap in the hedge, she saw its abrupt ascent, she thought it would be almost impossible to climb to its summit, much less to drive the cows down its side, which her father told her would be a portion of her daily labours. They came to the pretty church of Llangathen, and Rachel stopped to admire it — they passed by the house in which Dyer had once lived, and paused a moment to look at the "squire's" abode — they ascended a steep hill, and, resting to recover their breath, gazed upon a scene, finer, Rachel thought, than she had ever before beheld. They were close to the farm, and from a gate on one side of the road, issued Mr. Shenkin.

"Welcome to Grongar," said the little man, with a little voice: "my missus is expecting you, and is very anxious to see Rachel. I hope you aint tired. Dear me! don't show tired just at first if you can help it."

"And why not," grumbled Jackey: "a five mile walk is enough to tire a weakish girl that isn't used to it."

Having entered the gate, a house was visible of no very prepossessing appearance. Before Rachel had time to examine it, a voice reached her ear, but whether masculine or feminine she could not determine. It

was very coarse and very loud, and said very audibly,—

"Sally, Davvy, Jack! where's your master? Here's fifty things to do, and he's never in the way. Shenkin! Shenkin! where are you? Come here directly, or I'll ——"

What Mrs. Shenkin, for it proved to be that lady, meant to do, it is impossible to say, for her dear husband cut short her affectionate appeal, by shuffling towards the house, and by saying in, what appeared to Jackey, tones far too submissive, "Here, my dear — here am I — just come from the field, my dear ——"

"Oh! you're always just —" began Mrs. Shenkin, as she, herself, appeared from behind the house; but she became silent as she perceived Rachel and her father.

Oh! poor Rachel! if your first impressions are truly given, you are not blessed in a mistress. A tall, coarse, masculine-looking woman, with red face, red arms, red eyes, and red hair, was the *better* half of the small and subdued Shenkin. Such a woman alone could have emitted such a voice. The fillets of her cap were streaming on the air; her mouth was open to the vociferations to which she delighted to abandon herself; and, as she strode along with her huge wooden shoes, and loose blue skirt, towards her awe-struck husband, you would have thought she was going to swallow him.

"My dear," he began, hoping to close her mouth before she had gobbled him up, "here's my friend Lewis and his daughter, a nice young girl you see."

"I don't see any thing of the kind," was the aside reply; for Mrs. Shenkin made a point of not borrowing her opinions either of people or things from any one, particularly her husband, and, consequently, disagreed with every body. Advancing, or rather striding towards the trembling Rachel, she changed her tone, and asked Jackey and herself to walk in and sit down.

Even the determined Jackey was over-awed by this man-woman, and it was some little time before he could assure himself that she was but one of the despised sex after all. "Oh!" he thought, "she will never teach Rachel proper obedience—a bad companion for an unmarried woman." Mrs. Shenkin having eyed him and Rachel from head to foot, only remarked that the latter did not look very strong, but she supposed she would get used to her work, and be hearty enough by and by.

Jackey began to think that he had been over hasty in accepting a place for Rachel, of which he knew nothing, but every objection that he started was overruled by Mrs. Shenkin, who, as soon as she saw him waver, determined, at all risks, to keep his daughter. "She was earned," she said, "and she was sure they should get on very well together. She couldn't give her much wages the first year—a pound or so, and more the second, and so on; but Mr. Shenkin had spoken so well of her, that she would rather run the risk of her being weakly than lose her." Mr. Shenkin looked mute astonishment, when he heard his opinion quoted as an authority.

He had told his wife that he had earned Rachel for a year, therefore, in spite of the wish expressed by Jackey that "she should see how she got on for a month first, and then settle matters," for a year she was bound to remain.

Jackey did not know how to act. He saw that there would be great difficulty, if not impossibility, in returning the earn to such a woman as Mrs. Shenkin; and even supposing that he succeeded in doing so, how was Rachel to obtain another place? Hollantide fair was past, and every mistress had procured her servant. How, moreover, was she to be removed from the vicinity of William, to whom, he felt assured, she was attached, and to her marriage with whom he would never give his consent? There was no alternative: he looked at Rachel's pale face and tearful eyes with a struggle; but suddenly remembering that she had been still paler when she parted with William, he steeled himself against his own softer feelings, and decided upon her remaining with the Shenkins. In his fear of offending his child's mistress by making any request out of the regular order of things, he omitted settling any one point concerning her future position, and thus left her to the mercy of her employers for one year at least. But having resolved upon her staying, he let the matter rest, and began to do justice to the bread, cheese, and ale which Mrs. Shenkin set before him, and of which his friend Shenkin also partook. Rachel seated herself at some distance from them, and when Mrs. Shenkin invited her to eat, replied that she

would rather not. Mrs. Shenkin stared — "refuse bread and cheese! and a farm servant too!" she thought, but she said nothing.

A slip-shod, stockingless, dirty-looking girl, with a baby in her arms, now entered, and standing still, fixed her broad eyes upon Rachel. Mrs. Shenkin took the baby, and told Sally to go to her work, looking, the while, with something of amazement at the huge lumps of bread and cheese that were disappearing within the capacious mouths of the two little friends. Mr. Shenkin drank Jackey's health, and success to Rachel, in return for which, Jackey drank Mr. and Mrs. Shenkin's health, not forgetting the infant who was beginning to cry in his mother's arms. She shook the child, which made him scream loudly, and Rachel, who could never resist the cry of infancy, rose, and after admiring the little ugly thing, begged to be allowed to nurse it.

"Ay, take the brat," said Mrs. Shenkin, "it is the most troublesome, cross creature I ever saw."

Rachel took the child, and by moving it gently for a few moments, and nursing it in a very different manner from that to which it was accustomed, quieted it, and eventually elicited a certain crow, which always shows a baby's complete satisfaction.

"Bless my heart," exclaimed Mr. Shenkin; "is that our child? Why you shall be head nurse if you make him so good-tempered. I never heard him do any thing but cry and moan before."

Mr. Shenkin was getting facetious over his ale, and Mrs. Shenkin felt newly aggrieved.

"Glad to see you again," old fellow, said the former; "come and pay your daughter a visit sometimes—always welcome to Grongar."

"Bless me, *Mr. Shenkin*," interrupted his amiable wife, "how the bull is bellowing and running about the hill—sure something's the matter—run and see, quick!"

Mr. Shenkin rose reluctantly and went to the door.

"Oh! I don't see any thing the matter, my dear," he said.

"He's the other side of the hill, now, quite furious—run quick—run quick;" and Mrs. Shenkin, as she ejaculated the last words, gave her husband such a significant look, that he did "run quick," and found the bull quietly grazing on the brow of the hill.

His wife's *ruse* had succeeded, however; and Jackey, thinking it time to depart, rose to go, as soon as his friend returned. He expressed his hopes that Rachel would be a good girl, and "give satisfaction," and wishing Mr. and Mrs. Shenkin good morning, left the house, followed by his daughter, who said she would accompany him as far as the turning. At "the turning," poor Rachel could restrain herself no longer. She fell upon her father's neck and wept bitterly. His sturdy heart relaxed.

"God bless you, my dear child," he said; "you have been a good girl to me, and I know you will be always good."

He kissed her tenderly, pushed his few remaining

shillings into her hand, and walked quickly down the hill, leaving her to stem such a rush of feelings as she had never before experienced. She returned slowly to the house, and as she did so, uttered an inward prayer for strength to act uprightly, and to perform her duty cheerfully.

As she re-entered the farm-yard, she was struck with the untidy appearance of the house and its appurtenances. Mr. Shenkin, though better off than most of his brother farmers, was not a favourable specimen.

I cannot say much for Welsh farms generally. There are, of course, farmers in Wales of a higher class, who boast good, well-appointed dwellings, and who take pride in keeping them in respectable condition, both outside and inside. These are, however, comparatively few. The farms are mostly very small, and the crops, in these parts at least, are either very backward, or the farmers slow and dilatory. Certain it is they are very poor, and there seems to be a spirit of procrastinating amongst the people, and a want of steam when they are set going, which retards their improvement. They adhere obstinately to their own opinions, and are contented to say, "Oh, it'll *come* yet," meaning that all will be right in time, without intending to learn how to set it right. They plod on in their poverty, scarcely knowing how to make their rent for the land they hold, yet seemingly careless of bettering themselves, until some sudden cause of excitement arouses all their Welsh blood, and then they grasp at, they know not what.

In Mr. Shenkin's farm, no march of improvement

or of neatness is visible, if we may judge from the untidy appearance of the exterior. Situated in a field lying beneath Grongar Hill, it is open to the attacks of all the inhabitants of the said hill and field, being without fence of any kind. Before the door, on one side, is a large dunghill, upon which the glory of the farm, the barton cock, struts in proud dominion, sounding his shrill clarion to the admiration of the multitudinous hens and chickens that look up to him. Brightly do his red crest, and burnished gold plumage shine in the sun as he paces backward and forward, occasionally scratching up a morsel of food, and gallantly leaving it to a favoured hen. I have seen many a park soldier, glittering in all the splendour of lace and appointments, far less glorious than that dignified old gentleman. As Rachel crosses the yard, she is assaulted by a vanguard of geese, supported by a reserve of turkeys. The geese have just left a bath, in which they have been refreshing themselves, and which, though shallow and muddy, and mantled with green vegetation, is, to them, the respite from all their labours — the solace of all their leisure hours. They waddle a few paces, stretch out their necks, expand their wings, collect themselves for the charge, then on they run with their war-cry upon the devoted intruder. She, however, knows the character of the foe, and drives them all before her. The importunate gander alone maintains his ground, and hisses her till she has passed, then hisses her on behind. As to the turkeys, they display their huge fans with prodigious consequence, wondering, doubtless, who the interloper

can be, but forbearing any thing beyond a show of hostility. A very large pig, that was resolutely turning up the earth, desists, and bolts in amongst them. Geese and turkeys rush upon him as their natural enemy, and drive him from their territories. In front of the house Rachel sees a line of pails, tubs, wooden bowls, and dairy utensils of all sorts and sizes, whilst a variety of cheese-cloths are hung upon three-armed posts to dry. A cart and wheelbarrow stand on the left side, the former minus a wheel; and plenty of filth is observable every where; indeed the mud is so deep in some places that Rachel can hardly get on. True, the whole, relieved by enormous trees behind, is exceedingly picturesque to the eye of a sketcher, but, alas! for neatness and comfort, they are notions that could have no place here.

As Rachel once more entered the large, dirty, and disordered kitchen, she thought of her own tidy little room, and felt sick at heart. There was plenty of tables and chairs, plates and dishes, cups and saucers, candlesticks and pewter tankards; but they were lumber instead of furniture, for nothing had its place. There were hams and bacon in abundance, hanging suspended to the view in the middle of the room, and there was a wide open chimney, and a stack of wood at hand to keep up the blaze, but there was no assurance of open-heartedness. The room, too, was full of draughts. The windows hung loosely upon their hinges; and it was so far to send for a glazier, that a broken pane remained unmended, or, at best, received a paper plaster. The door was never shut,

and there was, moreover, a second door, opening into the dairy, through which rushed the wind, that was admitted there to cool the milk and harden the butter. There was another room, called the hall, which was never entered unless any of Mrs. Shenkin's particular friends came to visit her, when the tables and chairs were suddenly relieved from a month's dust, and the best china set out.

Rachel had not been many hours with Mrs. Shenkin before she discovered that she was one of those persons who seemed resolved never to be in a good temper. She was certainly a descendant, though a remote one, of the Furies. Scold, scold, scold, all day long. She did not confine herself to washing-week, but continued in an uninterrupted course of vociferation from five or six o'clock in the morning, till eight or nine at night.

It is said, and truly, that the ear accustoms itself to all noises. The incessant pealing or tolling of bells; the uninterrupted thumping of a school of young ladies on one or two unfortunate instruments; even the eternal clacking of a mill, are sounds that are disregarded by those who live constantly near them; and thus the clatter of Mrs. Shenkin's tongue had grown a dull, unheeded noise in her household, except when an unusual explosion occurred. Then Mr. Shenkin was blown one way; Sally, the slip-shod maid, another; such of the men and boys as chanced to be in the way, a third; whilst Mrs. Shenkin remained alone in her glory. When Rachel first witnessed the phenomenon, she was at the top of Grongar Hill

before she knew how she got there. But I am anticipating.

Rachel found Mrs. Shenkin exercising herself upon Sally, the girl, meanwhile, looking quite unconscious of any thing that required her attention; and when, soon after, Sally was initiating Rachel into some of the household work, she told her, aside, "Never to mind mistress, for she would be sure to scold, whether she was pleased or no." Poor Rachel found that more would be expected of her than she could perform; and when she retired with Sally to a wretched garret, she felt more fatigued than she had ever done before.

She took a cursory glance at the cold, comfortless, untidy room, which looked as if it had not had a brush in it since it was built, and determined to clean it as soon as she could. The bed, with its heap of old blankets, gowns, and mixed covering, upon which, until then, she would have thought it impossible to lie, seemed now a welcome retreat. Sally's tongue, too, was scarcely less voluble than that of her mistress, when once it was allowed to go; and Rachel was deluged by communications about "master and mistress," who, Sally said, "were as different from one another as chalk and cheese. Master was a very good sort of a man if he could but have his way, but mistress was master there. I don't mind her a bit, though; and be sure you don't care for her tantrums, for if you do she'll show off fifty for one." Rachel begged Sally not to talk whilst she said her prayers, at which Sally opened a wide mouth, laughed

heartily, and threw herself into bed. Rachel took no notice of her; but having knelt down and commended herself and those she loved to the care of the Almighty, and prayed for strength to do her hard duty, she closed her eyes, and, overpowered by the fatigues of the day, fell asleep. Visions of her father, of William, of Pally, came to visit her. A confused mixture of All Hallow's Eve, Hollandtide Fair, and her last day at home, was in her dreams, and she by turns wept and smiled, as pleasant or unpleasant delusions came before her.

Oh! the blessing of night and sleep to the weary and unhappy. To sink into forgetfulness of life's myriad cares and sorrows — to lay aside the burden of the day, and to yield up the weary limbs and enfeebled senses to the comfort of repose — to lay open the mind to the entrance of delightful visions, which have the power of transporting you, with the velocity of thought, from penury to riches — from misery to happiness — from despair to hope — to live again past scenes, and to see once more departed friends; these are but a portion of the benefits conferred upon us poor mortals by

"Tir'd Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep!"

But this state of happy unconsciousness must be succeeded by the morning's awaking, which to the wretched is attended by an uncomfortable uncertainty of mind. The baseless visions of the night vanish, and the dull realities of every-day life start up singly in their places, and bewilder the imagination by their

indistinctness, until you look about and ask where you are, what has been or is the matter, and what is likely to happen to you.

As to Rachel, she scarcely knew what to think of herself when she was aroused from one of her pleasant dreams of home by a sharp voice, and saw by her bed-side a white figure with a candle in its hand. Old Pally's ghost stories rose upon her mind, and she trembled from head to foot, when a movement by her side aroused her to a sense of her condition. Another ghost sat up in bed for a moment, and then suddenly jumped out of it, whilst ghost the first brought her to her calm senses by the unmistakeable words — "Oh! this is what you're used to, is it? this is how you lie a bed, and how long you take to wake! How do you think the work is to be done, if you aint out of bed at this time of day? Get up, girl, get up." A shake of the arm soon made Rachel feel who was near her, and she quickly left her bed.

"Why weren't you up, Sally, you lazy thing, you?" asked Mrs. Shenkin.

"Bless you, ma'am," was Sally's answer; "I've been awake and dosing again — awake and dosing again this hour, listening for the clock, but as bad luck would have it, I suppose I was asleep just when it struck, and now the mornings are so dark there's no knowing the time, and no seeing any thing."

Mrs. Shenkin did not take the hint which Sally meant to convey, for she walked off with the candle, and left her two servants to huddle on their things in

the dark as best they could. Rachel asked if they were always to get up in the dark.

"To be sure, till the mornings are light," was the reply. "I get a candle now and then from mother," Sally continued, "but I always use it at night to mend my things."

Sally was a Welsh servant, and Welsh servants are not always conscientiously addicted to truth. A ready excuse, which is generally a direct falsehood, is always made. It matters not how trivial may be the fault, or how lenient the mistress, the lie is a matter of course, to cover the one and deceive the other. Servants will uphold each other through thick and thin. Even though they hit upon two different excuses at the beginning, they will manage to make the ends agree; and if by chance they fail in this, they hammer on at their own story, backwards and forwards, until they place you in such a labyrinth, that you are as far from coming at the truth as ever. Their fertility of invention is wonderful, as is their boldness in persisting in a fact which you have clearly proved cannot be true; but this is, I suppose, a part of their characteristic pertinacity in adhering to their own opinions. I have heard a well-meaning Welsh girl declare that she pitied poor servants very much, because they were *obliged* to tell stories, and could not help themselves. She evidently considered it a duty to tell a lie, whenever she could thereby screen herself or her fellow-servants.

Sally included her master in her list of the dear friends for whom she would "say or do any thing, if

it was only to spite mistress;" and with remorseless volubility she heaped falsehood upon falsehood, and excuse upon excuse, to prevent poor Mr. Shenkin getting into a scrape. The dogs, the cats, the pigs, the poultry, that "nasty old cow"—for every thing that is disagreeable is "old"—every object, animate and inanimate, was made subservient to Sally's friendly purposes. Rachel was perfectly amazed to hear her, from morning to night, inventing falsehoods, apparently for the pleasure of the thing, and even scolding *her* when she told the truth; nay, more, contradicting her did she confess a fault. If Mrs. Shenkin asked her whether she had done such or such a portion of her work, and if she began by saying—

"I am very sorry, ma'am, but ——"

Sally immediately interrupted her, by a—

"Well, Rachel, I never knew the like of you! didn't I see you do it with my own eyes! and wasn't Bill by at the time? Go you and ask him, mistress, whether he didn't see her do it. Rachel don't know what she says half her time, I declare."

The inhabitants of the farm passed their days in any thing but rural innocence and peace. Mrs. Shenkin was constantly out of temper; Mr. Shenkin generally depressed; Rachel perpetually in fear; Sally and the men servants occupied in doing wrong, and concealing it; and the rest of the workmen and labourers in getting out of their mistress's way whenever they could manage to do so. As the weeks passed on, and Rachel became gradually better able

to do her work, she imperceptibly ingratiated herself into Mrs. Shenkin's favour, who was pleased with her in spite of herself. Rachel got fewer scoldings than the rest of the household, and was soon so much beloved by her fellow-servants, that she became more comfortable than she first imagined possible; but it was the comfort of knowing that she was doing her duty by every one about her, and not that proceeding from external circumstances. Sally said of her, —

"Well, I never did see such a girl as you; even Mrs. Shenkin don't keep noise at you like she do at every body else."

No. VIII.

GRONGAR HILL.

"GRONGAR HILL invites my song," said Dyer, as every one remembers who was instructed in polite learning during the reign of Enfield's Speaker, and "Grongar Hill invites my pen, and might invite the pencil of a Calcott or a Claude," say I. It is a place to fill the eye with tears and the heart with rapture. Rachel, who had never been at the summit of so high a hill before, though bred within sight of the black mountains, gazed entranced as every successive day she bounded up with elastic steps, and saw plains, woods, and mountains expanding wider and wider to her eye. Let it not be imagined that the cottage girl, untrained by book-lore or the teaching of the drawing-master, cannot feel and exult when nature spreads her wonders with unwonted prodigality. God has given to the human soul capacities of feeling and understanding, to constitute its highest enjoyments, and though these frequently lie wholly dormant in an existence that is merely animal and sensual, yet there are many, even among those who are chained to toil and drag the clog of poverty, who have their finer sense awakened, and who can reverence their Creator through the glories of his creation.

As Rachel looks from the top of Grongar Hill on the loveliest streams and valleys—on illimitable extent and variety—the poet or painter might envy her. Who has not felt his soul grow light and buoyant as he ascends high above the plain on which our common dwellings stand? Who has not felt his blood quicken, and his breathing become full and deep, as he looks from the mountain's brow upon the scenes he has left below? If he has the vigour of youth and health, he almost feels that he can fly, and longs, like Rasselas, for wings, so free and full of delight is his heart. Can the inhaling of nitrous oxide, that the chemists were awhile ago so fond of, be any thing like this? I am sure a good breeze on a high hill does more towards lightening the heart, than all the appliances of artificial life could effect.

I know not exactly how Rachel felt. I only know she was raised into a brighter existence whenever she attained the top of Grongar. One reason for this, to be sure might be, that she was, for the time, out of the reach of Mrs. Shenkin's sharp voice, and another, that she was quite alone and could think freely. However it might have been, she was never loth to save Sally "her turn up the hill after the cows," though it was hard work to get them together.

This morning, how she enjoys the fresh breeze and the lovely sun-rise! She has been at Grongar nearly six months, and it is May—green, blooming, mirthful May. In spite of hard work, a cross mistress, and separation from those for whom her heart yearns, she certainly looks much more healthy than she did

when she left her father's roof. As she stands on the top of the hill with a long, crooked stick in her hand, her face glowing with exercise, a rough faithful cur panting by her side, and some milk-white sheep grazing around her; who would not desire to paint or describe, or have some near interest in, a being so pure and so natural?

As it chances one or two of her cows have wandered to the brow of the hill, and she has followed them there. The sun has just risen, and lets fly his shafts of light from a sea of gold over and through all nature. The glowing orb sits in majestic grandeur — far, far away into the undistinguishable distance, go the green meadows with their constant flocks and herds; thick woods lie in rich patches here and there; the hedge-rows never cease, but in endless variety interlace the uplands; the white-washed cottage dots the plain; at longer intervals the villages, with spire or tower, or the turrets of the old ruin, catch the sunshine: in the extreme distance, opposite the sun, the hills are of the brightest blue, whilst here and there a faint mountain is seen upon which the darker shadows still remain. Through the meadows runs the Towey, threading its mazy way, a line of burnished silver, giving us back the vivid sun. Now it wanders by a farm-house and is lost in the trees that surround it: again it appears and makes its way towards a rustic cottage: once more it is hidden between some slight elevations, and then breaks forth anew, to gleam along the green fields. It visits hamlet, town, and ancient castle in its

course. Here and there a light bridge crosses it, and the arches, visible from Grongar, cast their shades into its waters, which give back another bridge in the sunshine. Here a solitary fisherman in his light coracle, that sole remnant of the ancient Britons, paddles along and ruffles its smooth surface; whilst his cheerful whistle, united with that of the shepherd-boy, together with the bleating of sheep, lowing of herds, and the note of the awakening birds, form a harmonious chorus. The short turf of the hill is spotted by the daisy, and down the hedge-rows that divide it the primrose continues to bloom. Under the briers the violet, but not the *sweet* violet, opens its purple bell, and the hawthorn is beginning to burst into its white blossom. Why does not the sweet-scented violet grow wild in this part of Wales? And why does not the nightingale

> " All the night long her amorous descant sing ? "

They must have been frightened away when war devastated the mountains and vallies; for that flower, so dear to every English child, and that bird, so loved by every pensive heart, have both certainly forsaken us.

Let it not be supposed that Rachel has been contemplating the sun-rise all the time that we have been looking at the landscape. She has been busily collecting the cows, and as they are tractable beasts, with the help of the dog has almost succeeded. Cautiously they are feeling their way down the hill, and seem sometimes inwardly to debate upon the

steps which they are about to take. Rachel trips after them, and hopes her mistress will not complain of her tardiness. Her steps and hopes, are, however, both arrested by a sudden scream, which is succeeded by another, and another, each more piercing than the last. She turns and hastens round the hill to the place whence the sounds appear to proceed. The first thing she sees is the bull, usually so quiet, giving himself the strangest airs imaginable. Before him is a woman in a red cloak, screaming in frantic terror. "She must be mad," thought Rachel, as frightened and breathless she ran towards the woman, whose gestures were alone sufficient to enrage any animal, however quiet. Now she screamed, now menaced the bull with her clenched fist, tossing about, as she did so, the red cloak that had first attracted his attention. The animal was evidently terrified, and only temporarily refrained from either knocking her down or tossing her, on account of a species of uncertainty that he seemed to entertain, as to what creature he had to encounter. Rachel flung her hat at him, and struck him on his forehead, and scarcely had it fallen to the ground when it was succeeded by her stick and a stone which she found near her. The blows arrested the bull and diverted his attention from the woman, who, as soon as she saw him turn from her, ran like lightning down the hill, and left Rachel alone to contend, as best she could, with the furious animal. With a toss and a bound he rushed towards her. She had had the precaution to stand at a little distance from him, and now turned and fled before

him. But what availed flight? He gained upon her momentarily, and was soon close behind her. She heard him approach, and shuddered as the thought of death darted through her mind; for who is prepared to die at a moment's warning? She uttered an inward prayer to the Great Being, who, though invisible, she knew to be near her at that awful time, and turning round, resolutely faced the bull. The boldness of the action checked, and the fascination of the eye restrained, him. He paused and looked at her, butting with his head as he did so. It was but for a moment. He seemed about to spring upon her, and she gave herself up for lost. A thought entered her mind, sent into it by the Power whose aid she had invoked. She fell flat upon her face, and lay motionless as one dead. She had heard of a similar expedient being successfully resorted to under similar circumstances. She might have swooned in her excess of terror, or life might have departed from her body, so immovable was her form. Not a sign of agitation was visible: her arms and hands were crossed beneath her face; her body was distended, and she lay still as death. The bull was again arrested, and stood, as at bay, gazing upon her.

It is impossible to say what his further manœuvres might have been, had they not been prevented, and his attention withdrawn from Rachel, by the appearance of a dog. It was Rachel's faithful cur: he had missed her, and had come in search of her, and no sooner did he see her stretched upon the ground, than, with a sharp bark, he jumped upon the bull, placing

himself, with true canine sagacity, before his mistress, and barking, snapping and biting so vehemently, as to make the enemy retreat a few paces. But whilst he was imperceptibly moving backwards, he was evidently meditating a spring upon the poor little dog. Dash was, however, too cunning for him, and avoided his attacks with great skill and agility, being well versed both in the offensive and defensive. He had not driven obstinate cows ever since he was a puppy for nothing, and he doubtless felt proud to exert his prowess upon a more dangerous antagonist.

Whilst he was keeping the bull at bay, by his successful attacks, and whilst Rachel lay upon the ground, still not daring to move, several figures were seen ascending the hill. The foremost of these was the woman who had first excited the fury of the bull. No sooner did she perceive Rachel from a little distance, than she uttered a shriek so wild and piercing, that the hill rang with it. "She is dead—she is dead," she screamed, and was only prevented by main force, from rushing towards the bull. Mrs. Shenkin and Sally held her, whilst Mr. Shenkin, Tom and Bill made a short *détour*, and proceeded to the scene of action. Mr. Shenkin, never one of the bravest, was frightened out of his seven senses. He did not know what to do, so the men were obliged to act for him. "Oh! poor Rachel—poor dear Rachel," he groaned; "what will I do? What will Jackey Bach say to this—what will he say?"

Tom and Bill had had the precaution to furnish themselves with large waggon ropes, and begging the

rest of the party to keep out of the way of the bull, they made a kind of circuit, until they came unperceived behind the animal, when, placing themselves on each side of him, they carefully, but suddenly, cast the ropes about his neck and horns, and thus succeeded in securing him.

"Master, we have him safe—move Rachel away," cried the men.

Before "master" came, Rachel's face turned round, looking ghastly pale. The men, who were with difficulty endeavouring to quiet the bull, almost let go the ropes in their delight and astonishment at perceiving that she was really alive.

"Run, Rachel, run," they said; "all's safe—all's well."

Rachel rose and ran a few steps towards the women, who were hastening to her assistance. Her powers were well nigh exhausted, and she would have fallen to the ground had not the stranger, with a wild laugh of delight, seized her in her arms, and whilst she almost suffocated her with kisses, supported her.

"Shan't have her!" she said. "No, no, no—shan't have her, Mrs. Shenkin. Ha, ha, ha! she isn't dead; no, she isn't dead."

Sally drew near.

"Come Moll, come, there's a good girl; give her to me, or just put her down upon the grass now, that she may breathe the air. Look you, Mary, 'tis nice and soft, and poor thing she isn't well just now."

"Shan't have her," pertinaciously returned the woman, who proved to be poor Mad Moll of Llan-

gathen, and who held Rachel's now senseless form in a close embrace.

"Come now," pursued Sally, who knew force or harshness would be unavailing; "come, and you shall have a new gown, and go back you know where."

It was no good.

"Shan't have her," was the mad woman's only reply.

"There now!" continued Sally; "just look — she'll die if you don't put her down, and run and get her some water. You can run faster than any one, Moll."

"My name isn't Moll, 'tis Mary," interrupted the woman; but the last argument had proved effectual, and placing Rachel upon the grass, she set off full speed towards the house.

Mrs. Shenkin, who had kept aloof during the dispute between Sally and Moll, now drew near, and, softened by Rachel's condition, knelt by her side, and assisted in supporting her. Mr. Shenkin had procured some water, which Sally administered, and which, together with the poor little man's grief, for he stood crying like an infant, and wringing his hands, gradually restored Rachel to life.

"I am better now. Is the bull gone? — is the woman safe?" were her first words. She was assured that all was well. "Thank God!" she exclaimed as she clasped her hands and lifted her eyes towards heaven.

She first poured out her heart in a fervent thanks-

giving for her preservation, and then thanked those who were assembled round her for hastening so quickly to her rescue. Sally told her that they had been surprised to see the cows arrive without her, and still more astonished by the sudden appearance of Mad Moll, who came screaming down the hill, "The bull, the bull!" and frightened them all dreadfully. Here Mad Moll returned, bearing a large pitcher of water up the hill, which the party were now descending. She approached Rachel, and pouring some water into a cup which she held in her hand, presented it to her, and whilst she drank it, laughed and clapped her hands with exceeding glee.

"Drink it, pretty girl! no bull now—ha, ha, ha. I fought him, and he didn't like it—then he went moo-oo-ou—and I laughed at him, and he laughed at me; and then he moo-oo-ou'd again, very loud, and I was frightened, and you came and helped me. I wo'n't forget—no, I wo'n't forget. Eh! Mrs. Shenkin! I wo'n't forget. Scold, scold, scold. Noise, noise, noise."

It was astonishing how silent Mrs. Shenkin had been during the whole of Mad Moll's proceedings. She looked frightened, and slunk behind the rest of the party to avoid encountering her eye. But Moll would not be shunned, and was evidently bent on mischief. Just as they were about to move on, she took a dirty pincushion from her pocket, and placed it in Rachel's hand, telling her that "she should have that to keep for her own." Whilst doing this, she slily seized her opportunity, and upset the wa-

ter over Mrs. Shenkin's feet, rolling the pitcher down the hill, and scampering off as soon as the feat was performed, leaving Mrs. Shenkin to vent her anger as she pleased.

Mad Moll was a singular-looking creature. She appeared to be about thirty years old, and bore the traces of considerable beauty. Her eyes were black and very large. They were at times wild, but an occasional sly glance showed that there was meaning in their wildness. Her raven hair, which knew not the comforts of a comb, hung in matted locks down her cheeks, and gave her the appearance of a gipsy. Her face was bronzed by exposure to the weather, and her features had become coarse and hard. Her white teeth quite sparkled between her deep red lips as she laughed her strange laughs, and her large black eyes shot fire as they looked out from beneath their long lashes. She had an old straw bonnet on, or rather half off her head, with a piece of narrow green riband twisted about it, in which was stuck a bunch of hawthorn. An old red cloak hung loosely about her shoulders, beneath which a tattered flannel gown and apron were visible. The latter portion of her dress was fastened by the corners to her waist, and was made to contain every article she could get possession of. She wore neither stockings nor shoes, but had converted a pair of white stockings which had been given her, into mittens for her arms, Her ornaments were a string of berries round her neck, and a bunch of wild flowers in her bosom.

Every thing was behind-hand at the farm after the

misadventure with the bull. The cows were waiting to be milked—the pigs to be served—the poultry to be fed—the cheese and butter to be made—the screaming baby to be nursed—the clothes, for, alas! it was washing week, to be scrubbed white—and so much to be done that Mrs. Shenkin's temper was constantly tried, and Rachel and Sally were glad when nine o'clock warned them to retire to their garret, after the labours of the day were over. It was not until this hour, that Rachel found an opportunity of inquiring of Sally some particulars concerning Mad Moll, which she had never heard, and which Sally gave her with so many ornaments of her own, that I must be pardoned for not inserting them here, and for waiting until I can have better authority for them.

Rachel had laboured hard to impress Sally with some notion of truth, but the absolute delight she took in deceiving Mrs. Shenkin, rendered her a hopeless subject, whilst the habit of lying she had acquired seemed too inveterate to be cured.

"I wouldn't hurt myself or any body else, except perhaps mistress a little bit, by fibbing," she would say, "so there can't be any harm. Besides, if every body was to go and say every thing that is true, as you do, Rachel, what would become of some of us who don't always do quite right? Why, we shouldn't be in any one's service a day, or should be sent to the treadmill, or some such place, every month."

I cannot leave the bedroom, or rather garret, without doing Rachel the justice due to her. A great

change has been operated here, which Sally, though by no means instrumental to it, is not loth to perceive. Every corner is now perfectly clean. The bed is covered with a decent, though mended patchwork quilt, and the old curtains have been washed and repaired. White paper, neatly pasted on, covers the still unglazed hole in the window, and not a cobweb is visible on the walls. The rickety table is supported by pieces of wood, and stands firm; whilst Sally's morsel of looking-glass is bordered with blue paper, and hung up against the wall. Upon the table are Rachel's Bible and Prayer-book—the work-box William made for her, which Sally, as well as herself, finds very useful, and a neat pincushion; whilst an old white apron is spread over it in form of toilet cloth. Round the room are ranged Rachel's and Sally's boxes, baskets, and the like, which contain their stock of finery, and added to which is an old chest, that Mrs. Shenkin, in an extraordinary fit of generosity, bestowed upon them for their best hats and gowns. This, and a rush-bottomed chair, form their seats, upon which, on the night in question, they sat down to talk over the events of the day. It was a difficult task to make Sally tidy; but she was a good-natured girl, and very fond of Rachel, so she really tried, and not unsuccessfully, to improve.

The morning after the adventure with the bull, Rachel rose early, as usual, and went to fetch the cows. The bull was tied up, therefore she had no fear, and did not trip the less lightly up the hill, on account of her fright of the previous day. She again

returned thanks to Heaven for her preservation, as she passed the place where the encounter had happened. On looking down she perceived a bundle of old clothes and rags, or rather an ancient blanket, enveloping a variety of articles. She remembered that Mad Moll always carried her bedding and wardrobe over her shoulder, and knew that the heap must belong to her. She was considering the best means of restoring the things to her, when Mad Moll herself appeared. She ran forward with a joyful laugh, and threw herself at Rachel's feet.

"Here is your bundle," said Rachel, taking her kindly by the hand and raising her. "Where are you going to-day?"

"Going! oh, I don't know. I never know where I go. I shall come again some day and see you. No, I shan't forget the bull: he didn't kill me, you wouldn't let him. What do they call you?"

"Rachel is my name — will you remember it, Moll, and come and see me?"

"My name's Mary, please, and not Moll" — she was very particular about her name. "But what do they call you? say it again."

"Rachel — but I must be going, or Mrs. Shenkin ——"

"Dear, yes! — go you, Rachel; run you; don't let her hurt you — poor Rachel."

Here the unfortunate woman threw her arms round Rachel, and uttered a low moaning sound; but no tears were visible in her wild black eyes. Rachel, gently disengaging herself from her, said, —

"I hope I shall see you again soon, Mary; but I must drive the cows down to be milked now, so good-by, and take care of yourself till you come again."

She pressed the poor creature's hard hand kindly as she spoke, and felt her heart overpowered with emotions of pity and sympathy. She had some pence in her pocket, and she offered them to her. The poor woman drew herself up with exceeding dignity, and waving them from her, said,—

"Not from you — not from you. *They* may give me money, and I will take it, though I ought to be very rich; but you saved me from the bull, didn't you?"

Rachel returned the pence to her pocket, ashamed of having offered them, and once more bade her farewell. Mad Moll seated herself upon the grass, and, resting her head on her hand, watched Rachel down the hill until she disappeared. She then murmured some indistinct sentences, and, rising, took up her bundle, and slung it upon her stick across her shoulder. She had evidently no purpose, for first she walked a few steps on one side, and then turned again and walked a few steps on the other; then she stood still and looked about her, apparently forgetting that she was intending to move at all, and finally, as if suddenly recollecting herself, she wheeled quickly round, and pursued a third direction, which led her across the top of the hill. She stopped to gather a few primroses that grew in her path, and turned round as if to give them to some one; then muttering, "She's gone now," she put them into her apron, and con-

tinued her way, now humming part of an old tune, and now talking to herself. She appeared quite contented and happy, and amused herself with gathering the berries and flowers that she met with, unconscious of her melancholy state. The sky, the warm sun, the fresh air, the green fields, the flowers, and her own wild fancies, were pleasures enough for her, and as long as she was allowed to wander unmolested, she was a happy creature. On she went, where and how she listed, now pursuing, and now deviating from, the straight path, until she disappeared beneath the hill, where we will leave her for the present.

No. IX.

MAD MOLL'S STORY.

THE little village and church of Llangathen are picturesquely situated beneath Grongar Hill. It is a snug pleasant village, and a very pretty church and churchyard. From the churchyard the view is grand and extensive. Grongar Hill rising at the right forms a bold foreground to the more distant landscape — the rich and diversified vale of the Towey. Beneath is the house in which Dyer the poet lived, a handsome old mansion, with fine wood about it. Here Dyer resided during many years of his life, when he found that the courts of Westminster Hall were not his atmosphere, and was much loved and respected. He left, and the house passed to another family, and little is remembered of him or his virtues. Many a beautiful flower blooms about the graves of the churchyard, and a lovelier scene could scarcely be conceived than that which lies around you as you traverse its precincts.

Mad Moll, or, as we must now call her, Mary, was not born in Llangathen, but was brought thither when about six years old. She was the offspring of sin and sorrow; and could her unhappy mother now see her child, bitterly indeed would she suffer. Little

is known of Mary's early history. She was born probably on the borders of Wales. Her father was a man of station; her mother, his victim, died when she was quite young, leaving her, in the true sense of the word, an orphan. It was supposed, however, that the little Mary was kindly treated and well brought up until her sixth year, living either in or near her father's house. Her recollections of her early days were always lively, and even now visions of her infancy seem to float occasionally through her disordered brain. She has been even heard to say, "I should not be like this if my father knew it." That father married, and determined, or perhaps it was determined for him, to break every link that bound him to his child by sending her to a distance. He accordingly gave her into the care of a man named John Harries, of whom he knew nothing but that he was a drover who lived at Llangathen, a place far from his own residence. Little is known of what passed between Mary's father and John Harries, — nothing, indeed, but what the latter chose to communicate to his neighbours when he returned home. He was to keep the child, bring her up decently, and do for her as he thought best, for which he was to receive, and did receive, one hundred and twenty pounds — a little fortune to a man in his condition of life. He doubtless promised fairly to the father, or to whomsoever finally settled the matter, and probably, at the time, intended to perform his duty by the child.

It is between twenty and thirty years ago since

John Harries and his charge arrived, late in the evening, at Llangathen. He had been absent from home longer than usual, and his wife and children were expecting his return. They were clamorous at the sight of him; and the first question asked by his wife — it was ever her first question — was, "What money have you brought home?" He chuckled as he introduced the little stranger, who, terrified at the appearance of so many unknown faces, had shrunk behind him. His wife was delighted at the gold he displayed, and was, in imagination, soon established in a comfortable farm-house. She did not so much rejoice in the care which the gold brought with it, but she comforted herself by saying that, as the child was already six years old, she would soon be useful.

John and Kitty Harries had five children; the youngest, a boy of about twelve years, was the only one of them who looked good-temperedly upon Mary when she came to Llangathen. The present Mrs. Shenkin, a relative of Kitty's, and at that time a spinster, made one of the family.

Mary was a bright-eyed creature, full of life and natural gaiety; her face plump and rosy, and her little limbs strong and active. John Harries was proud of the admiration she excited among his neighbours, whilst his wife was proud of a new gown and bonnet, the first purchases made from their newly-acquired wealth. Little Mary was neatly, though plainly dressed, and brought with her a good store of clothes for a child of her condition. It was impossible to look at her rosy cheeks, arch black eye, and

dimpled mouth, and not be convinced that she was a creature of joy and innocence — one who seemed never to have known check or privation. From her introduction to Kitty Harries she took a dislike to her. She shrunk away from her the first night and clung closely to John, asking him when she might go home again. Her fear daily increased; and although Kitty was, for some little time, kind to her, she never overcame her aversion. She was miserable, and would retire to a corner and cry, unobserved, whenever she could escape from Kitty. If any one asked her what was the matter, she would say she wanted to go home; and when questioned concerning her home, would speak of the friends she had left behind — of her father's visits to her, and of many other little events which had impressed themselves upon her mind, and which have not been effaced from it, not even when her intellects had become disordered, and her powers of recalling the past destroyed. She made one friend in the Harries' family, and only one. This was the youngest boy Willy, who was very fond of her, and whom she loved as a brother. Little Mary's only happy hours were when he returned from school in the evening; for truly she was, like Wordsworth's sequestered "Violet,"

> "A maid whom there were none to praise,
> And very few to love."

John Harries appropriated the money given with Mary to his own use, and improved his circumstances thereby; but it did not seem to occur to him that any

portion of it ought to be devoted to the service of his young charge. When Mary was about eight, John Harries happened again to visit the place from whence he had received her, and found, upon inquiry, that her father and his family had left it, and had gone, no one knew whither. This intelligence released Kitty from the obligation she had imposed upon herself of keeping up a show of kindness towards the child, upon the chance of inquiry being made. At seven years old Mary had much hard work to do; at eight she was a little slave. It was soon remarked that the blooming child became pale and thin — that her eyes were often swollen and red — that she looked terrified when spoken to, and that she was always afraid of encountering Kitty, whose ill temper daily increased. John Harries was a close man, and would never communicate his projects or proceedings to his wife, who saw the money gradually dwindling away, and bringing her no positive good. It is true they apprenticed one of their sons, and were, on the whole, better off than formerly; still Kitty felt little Mary to be a burden upon them, and hated her accordingly. All day long the child was subject to her ill-humour, and by degrees to that of her sons and daughters also, who, Willy excepted, took a delight in annoying and abusing her. The mother was very fond of Willy; and when he was at home Mary had a respite from her troubles, for he always took her part. Sometimes in the cold days of winter, when he returned from school, and found her shivering in a distant corner of the room, and striving to suppress her struggling tears, he would

take her hand, and lead her, in spite of her resistance, towards the chimney corner, and make her sit down by his side whilst he played or talked with her. It was fortunate for Mary that Willy had been a spoiled child all his life, and that his mother rarely thwarted him.

But oh! those winter days! No one can tell what Mary suffered. There was a near neighbour who pitied her sincerely. How good-natured Ann Jones's heart ached when she saw Mary with her little hands and feet naked, and covered with chilblains, returning from the brook with a pitcher of water too heavy for her strength, and the tears streaming down her cheeks at the pain she endured; or going to the wood for sticks, and not daring to return without a load sufficient for a strong boy! How her heart ached when she heard Kitty's imperious voice, or, what was worse, her blows, and Mary's heavy sobs! She knew that her remonstrances would be vain, still she could not forbear inquiring what was the matter. The only reply she ever obtained was, "that it was no business of hers," and that Kitty was only punishing "the worst and most troublesome brat that any one was ever plagued with." The people of the village by this time began to say that the Harries's did not treat Mary well; but an event in their family put a stop to all gossip on the subject.

Willy was taken ill, and all the care and attention of his mother were directed towards him. He had a violent fever, and in the height of his malady Mary was no longer persecuted, but was allowed to sit,

unnoticed, by his bedside, holding his burning hand, and crying as if her heart would break. As long as Willy remained sensible he would not allow her to quit him, but if she left the room, always asked whither she was gone. The mother was distracted with grief, for there was, from the first, little hope of his recovery. Mary was now old enough to understand the misery of her condition. When she reflected upon the probability of her losing the only being in the wide world who loved her, her brain became bewildered, and she could neither think nor move. Willy dead! What would become of her? She must die too, for how could she live without him? When he begged her not to cry, and told her that he should soon be well again, she ran into the open air to sob alone and unheard; but when he said that he thought he should die, and hoped God Almighty would forgive him and take him to heaven, she fell upon the bed, threw her arms about him, and wept so violently that she was obliged to be removed from the room. Then she would go to Ann Jones, and ask her if Willy must die. "God only knows that, my poor child," was the good woman's reply. "If it be His blessed will that he should recover, he will get well yet; and if not, I hope he will go to a better place, for he is a good litle boy, Mary."—"Oh! if I could only go with him," sobbed Mary — "if God would take me too, then I wouldn't mind. Oh! if I could die and go to heaven with him, we should be so happy!" It was in vain for Ann Jones to try to comfort her, for she would not be comforted. She

watched the face of her only friend change and become convulsed. She knew that he was dying, and she felt an agony of grief that few, perhaps, have ever known, since few are circumstanced as she was. When Willy turned his dying eyes upon her, and she saw their glazed, fixed look — when Kitty uttered a piercing cry and sunk upon the bed — she knew that all was over, and that her only friend was gone from her. She felt, as she afterwards described it, "all over giddy;" and when Ann Jones led her from the room, and took her to her own house, she was almost insensible. She remained with her friend Ann until the funeral was over; but whilst the corpse continued in the house she stole over constantly to look at Willy, and nothing that Ann could do or say gave her any comfort. Her only consolation appeared to be in talking of her departed friend and companion.

She returned home, and found that Willy's death had not softened Kitty's heart towards her. I should only disgust my readers were I to enter fully upon the long series of persecutions that she had to endure, not only from Kitty, but from Mrs. Shenkin and the rest of the family. It is supposed that her present hatred of Mrs. Shenkin had its foundation in her recollection of past ill-treatment. Suffice it to say, that under the united influence of her tormentors her health and spirits entirely gave way. Ann Jones began to think there was something strange about the child. She seemed to forget events in an extraordinary manner, and talking of Willy was still her only pleasure. She would recal, with pain-

ful minuteness, every word he had said to her on any occasion, together with the particulars of his death and funeral, always ending by wishing she had died with, or instead of, him. Sometimes she would start suddenly, as from a train of thought, and ask an incoherent question; but at home she seldom spoke at all, bearing blows and angry words with apparent indifference. This manner made Kitty, and her gossip, the present Mrs. Shenkin, more bitter against her than ever.

Ann Jones was one day summoned across the road to the Harries's house by fearful screams. She had before interfered between Kitty and Mary, and she now found the door locked against her. She had witnessed Mary's transgression on the present occasion, and felt assured that she was undergoing a severe punishment. The child had been to the brook for a pitcher of water, and had placed it upon the door-step whilst she unfastened the door. It was winter, and the stones were covered with ice. Her foot slipped, and she fell against the pitcher, which rolled off the step and broke to atoms. She screamed out. Kitty appeared, gave her a blow on the head, and dragged her into the house. The door was closed after them, and Ann Jones saw and heard no more, until the violent screams I have already mentioned, met her ear. She listened for a few moments to what was passing within. The screams gradually subsided into a low, muffled sound, and then all was quiet. She knocked, and no one came. She knocked

louder and louder, and at last the door opened, and Mrs. Shenkin appeared.

"Oh! Ann, is that you?" she said, looking as red as suppressed passion could look.

"There's nobody at home but me; and I was just gone into the garden for some cabbages, and I locked the door because there is so many idle good-for-nothings about."

"Where is Mary then?" inquired Ann, looking her fixedly in the face.

"Oh! she's just gone out for a pitcher of water," was the reply.

"Who was that I heard screaming just now? You must have been making a terrible noise in the garden by yourself," pursued Ann.

"Dear, yes, I think I heard it too; 'twas somebody up the lane, I suppose. Shall we go and look?"

"You can't deceive me," said Ann, with a firm voice. "I know those screams were Mary's; and if you don't bring her here to me, I'll go and fetch a constable."

"Go, and look yourself," said Mrs. Shenkin; "I tell you she isn't in the house."

Ann went accordingly; she searched the back kitchen, but Mary was not there — she went up stairs, but she was not to be found — she ran into the garden and called, but no one answered; again she returned to the back kitchen, where Mrs. Shenkin was standing looking triumphant. A short sob met her ear. She suddenly recollected that there was an old cellar little used, and consequently forgotten by the neigh-

bours. She went to a door covered with dirt and cobwebs, before which was placed a long stool. Mrs. Shenkin declared it was impossible to open that door, and that nobody ever went through it, because the cellar was haunted.

"Well, I'll brave the ghosts," said Ann, and pushing open the door, descended a few steps into a dark room. The objects it contained were scarcely visible, but Ann determined to prosecute the search. She walked round, and in one corner discovered Mary, stretched upon the floor, apparently lifeless, whilst near her, with a large rope in her hand, stood Kitty. Ann Jones endeavoured to raise the child, but she shrunk back, and screamed as if from pain. Ann spoke to her, but she was not, for a few minutes, aware who she was, mistaking her for Kitty. She was evidently much injured, for she could scarcely move. Ann declared her intention of going at once for a magistrate, when Kitty, in terror, burst out into promises of amendment, accompanied by every possible asseveration, declaring that she would be kind to Mary for the future, and would never lift her arm against her again. Ann made no promises, but insisted upon Mary's being removed from the dark cellar to bed, reproaching Kitty, meanwhile, for her disgraceful conduct to the poor orphan child. Kitty was terrified into decency, and poor Mary was conveyed up stairs.

Ann went to the parish officers, but could obtain no satisfaction, as they said Mary did not belong to Llangathen, and the Harrieses must do the best they

could with her. She had no higher authority to appeal to, and was therefore obliged to content herself by bringing the whole village about Kitty's ears. But this was of no service to Mary, and did not ameliorate her condition. She was now seldom visible, but as no great noise was heard in the house, the subject was gradually forgotten by all excepting Ann, who was constantly on the watch, but who seldom caught sight of Mary.

One morning a great bustle was seen and heard at John Harries's. All the household were in consternation, and the nighbours had collected about the house to learn what was the matter. Mary was missing—no one knew where she was, or what had become of her. Kitty said that she went to bed as usual the preceding night, at eight o'clock, and that in the morning she had disappeared. There was such evident truth in Kitty's statement, and such alarm in her manner, that Ann Jones believed the child had made her escape; but others whispered that there was something dark in the affair. The matter was, however, cleared up in a few days, by the appearance of Kitty Harries in the village street, triumphantly dragging Mary by the arm. She had discovered her in a wood at some distance, where it was supposed she had subsisted upon acorns and wild fruits. She looked attenuated, and laughed strangely when the neighbours questioned her upon what had happened to her, making incoherent answers to them. Ann Jones and her children crowded round her when she came near their house; and Kitty

told Ann to talk to her, since she could obtain no information from her. Ann asked her many questions, but received no fit answers to any. She fancied that the weakness proceeding from long abstinence had affected her mentally as well as bodily, and begged Kitty to give her food and repose. But Mary clung closely to Ann, and with a piteous cry entreated to be allowed to remain with her. It was vain; Kitty seized her roughly by the arm, and dragged her across to her old prison. She was kept close to the house; and Ann Jones never saw her but through the windows, for Kitty chose to consider herself aggrieved, and now never spoke to her good-natured neighbour.

One Sunday Kitty took Mary to church. Ann Jones boldly approached her, and spoke to her, but she only laughed strangely at her, whilst Kitty was dragging her along. She was no longer the handsome blooming like girl that she was when first she entered Llangathen, but was pale, and thin, and haggard, exciting compassion in every one who looked at her. As she walked through the churchyard, on her way back, she made her escape from Kitty, and ran towards Willy's grave. She knew it well, for when she had been allowed some portion of liberty, she delighted in stealing thither, and planting primroses, or whatever flowers she could obtain, around and about it. She seated herself upon the earth, and began to sob bitterly. The people gathered round her, and asked her what was the matter, but she made no reply to their inquiries.

Kitty told them, with genuine tears in her eyes, that the child had been very fond of her little boy, and was now lamenting him. Poor Mary talked very incoherently, and said she saw her dear Willy down below calling her to come to him, and that she would not leave him any more, but must go to him and live with him. Kitty at last forced her from the grave; but Ann Jones, and every one else, now saw that the child's reason was fast departing.

Still she had cunning enough again to elude the vigilance of her tormentors. This she effected one night when Kitty was on a visit to a friend, and John Harries absent on business. No one knows how she escaped from the house, or whither she went, but all search for her this time was vain. Years passed, and she was not heard of, and the inhabitants of Llangathen soon forgot that she had ever existed. Even Ann Jones and her family began to speak of her less often; and when she became the subject of their conversation, they alluded to her as one dead. It was never ascertained what became of her during this period; but it was supposed that she wandered far away, a destitute and lone creature.

> "Homeless beside a thousand homes she stood,
> Beside a thousand tables pin'd and wanted food."

Three or four years had elapsed, when one evening, towards dusk, there appeared opposite Ann Jones's house a beggar-girl of a strangely wild appearance. She looked about fifteen or sixteen years old, much weather-beaten, and very poorly clad. Ann spoke

to her, and asked her who she was, and what she wanted. "I won't go there," was the only answer she received, as the girl pointed to the Harries's house. Ann looked at her; and she said, "Mayn't I go in with you. Just you hide me away, — you won't beat me, — you won't kill me, — no, I'm sure you won't." Ann looked again earnestly into her face, and in the now wild black eyes, matted raven hair, and bronzed features, recognised the once lovely little Mary. She caught the poor girl in her arms, and almost carried her into the house. How shocked was she to find that reason, sense, recollection, were now entirely departed! An occasional glimmering of memory in the darkened chambers of her mind was all that appeared to show they had once been there. Ann talked to her on every subject that had once interested her, and endeavoured to recall the past; but she might as well have uttered her words to the northern blast. She seemed to have a partial recollection of Ann personally, that is to say, she unconsciously looked to her for kindness. The only subjects that awakened any thing like memory were the Harrieses, at the mention of whose names she would look wildly about her, and seek to hide in some corner of the room. When Ann spoke of Willy, she became silent and subdued, and appeared to endeavour to recollect the past. A casual mention of her father produced the words, "If my father knew it, I shouldn't be like this;" but no sooner had she uttered them than total forgetfulness succeeded. Ann Jones could not refrain from tears; and when Mary saw

them flow, she knelt down by her side, took her hand, and looking up wistfully into her face, said, "Ah, yes! poor Mary — you're kind and sorry, and don't laugh and make sport!" She was then silent for a few minutes, putting her hand upon her forehead, as if to summon thought to her aid, and then added, "You used, didn't you, ... yes, you used to...." but before she could finish the sentence the light was gone, and her mind was dark again. Ann could make out nothing from her wandering discourse of the life she had led for the past four years. She saw that she was mad, and rejoiced that it seemed a quiet madness — a mere loss of reason, without any fierce and terrible impulses. Her mind had gradually sunk under a repetition of cruelties, and was now a void. Ann prepared a bed for her, but it was with difficulty she could induce her to lie upon it. "Won't they come?" she asked; "won't they beat me?" Ann at length quieted her fears, and watched until she saw her sound asleep before she went to bed herself; but the next morning she was gone.

Ann Jones awoke with the sun, but no Mary. She spoke of her appearance and disappearance to her neighbours; for though she had been seen in the village, she had not been recognised. A slight search was made, but not diligently prosecuted, for the parish officers thought it better to let her roam about at will. The Harrieses pretended to be sorry that they had not seen her; and there the matter ended. As time passed on, however, Mad Moll — for so the

poor creature was called — was occasionally seen in the neighbourhood. The Harrieses left Llangathen, for nothing prospered with them; and it was said that John Harries was afflicted with much inward sorrow and remorse for their treatment of Mary.

Nearly twenty years have elapsed since Mary left Llangathen, and she is a lone wanderer still, and will not voluntarily remain under any roof even for a day. When they once confined her she became frantic. Her mind has, in a slight degree, recovered its powers, particularly that of memory, for she seems sometimes to have snatches of the past. She wanders the country over, appearing for a few hours, or a day, in some particular haunt, but never remaining long. She visits fairs and public gatherings, where she is the sport of many an unfeeling or unreflecting spectator; but she seldom appears in a place more than once in a twelvemonth. She is in general treated with kindness in her periodical rounds, and never forgets such treatment. There is one poor consolation in reflecting on her present condition: she is not unhappy, — she goes where she likes, and amuses herself as she likes, singing and dancing the livelong day. She procures food here, and a garment there, and, mindless as she is, is contented; whilst He who feeds the ravens is not unmindful of her!

No. X.

A FEMALE PEDLAR.

I HAVE made casual mention of a woman, who, from her occupation, has acquired the name of Cotton Ball. I must now introduce her more particularly to my readers as the most indefatigable of female pedlars. Carrying a large basket of cottons, tapes, shoe-ribbons, laces, pins, needles, and the like, she travels the country over with untiring activity. Short and sturdy, with a quick, calculating look, and a round good-tempered face, she is the very personification of industry. Her large wooden shoes and coarse black stockings are made for wear, not for show, and they answer their purpose admirably. It would be difficult to tell her age: she is not young, she is too active to be very old; she *may* be sixty, but her perambulatory powers would say thirty. She is here, there, and everywhere. Her usual circuit is from ten to twenty miles in a day,— seldom less than ten. There is not a farm-house or labourer's cottage within eight or ten miles of our town that she does not visit. Every work-box in the country is stocked from her basket; and it may almost be said that every tongue is stored with her gleanings, for in her rounds she gathers in such a rich crop of news

as to render her granary inexhaustible. Here she learns that a couple are about to be married—there that a courtship is broken off; here that Tom Lewis had a quarrel and nearly a battle with his wife—there that Peg Jenkins had a quarrel and nearly a battle with her husband. For births, deaths, and marriages, she is better than the parish register; and for knowing what "every body said to every body," she has not her equal. Such is Cotton Ball, the little square body who found herself, one fine July morning, at Grongar, selling cottons and tapes to Mrs. Shenkin with praiseworthy patience.

"There's Cotton Ball, I declare," said Sally to Rachel, as they were busily employed in cleaning the milk-pails and churn. "Oh! I'm so glad, for I don't know when's the time I've been to town; and I want I don't know how many things—besides I should like to hear the news."

I must stop to say that "going to town" is a phrase commonly used by every person in the neighbourhood of our great metropolis, and "going into the country" not unfrequently serves to express leaving the said metropolis to pay ever so short a visit at ever so short a distance from it.

Off ran Sally to hide herself in a corner of the kitchen where "mistress" could not easily see her, and where she could listen whilst the walking newspaper read out its contents. Rachel, less anxious for gossip, continued to scrub her pail, but intended to watch Cotton Ball's departure, that she might send a message by her to her father. The chief

subject of Cotton Ball's conversation with Mrs. Shenkin was the approaching election, which called forth a volume of abuse from the latter, whose temper was much chafed by the return of two Tory members for the county. She was a violent Whig, that is to say, she was one of those amiable characters occasionally said to exist among the fair sex, who are any thing and every thing by contradiction. Mr. Shenkin was at heart a Tory: Mrs. Shenkin was, consequently, a Radical, and had put her veto against his voting for a Tory member.

"Shall you go to the election, Mrs. Shenkin?" asked Cotton Ball, whilst she was measuring three yards and a half of shoe-ribbon.

"I, indeed! not I. *I* go to see those Tory men chaired! I'd rather walk twenty miles the other way."

"I suppose Mr. Shenkin will go," continued Cotton Ball, cutting off the ribbon with her huge shears.

"Mr. Shenkin, indeed!" said Mrs. Shenkin, with a toss of her head: "I don't suppose any such thing. I should like to see him, that's all."

"Why," pursued the imperturbable Cotton Ball, taking up one of her namesakes in her hand, "I thought he was a Tory; and there isn't a Tory in Carmarthenshire that will stay away—no, sure, not one. This is capital cotton, Mrs. Shenkin; how many balls shall I put you?"

"Mrs. Shenkin felt rather irate. When did she not? But thinking it better to restrain her ire in the

present company, she bought half a dozen balls of cotton, insisting upon having what she called a baker's half dozen, or one over and above."

"How's Rachel Lewis getting on?" asked Cotton Ball.

"Oh, pretty well, considering," replied Mrs. Shenkin; which was bestowing a higher meed of praise upon Rachel than she had ever yet granted to any one. "She wasn't used to hard work when she came, and she's weakly enough now: but I haven't much to say against the girl."

"That will be good news to carry to Jackey Bach, poor soul!" said Cotton Ball; "and he needs something to comfort him, for he is very poorly, and has been for some time."

"Don't you go and say that to Rachel now," began Mrs. Shenkin. But Cotton Ball changed the conversation to a history of "Tom Jones's bidding," and soon took fast hold of Mrs. Shenkin's thoughts and attention.

In the mean time Sally slipped away, and made Rachel miserable by detailing what she had heard concerning her father. Rachel begged Sally to remain within call of her mistress, whilst she ran a few paces down the road to wait until Cotton Ball should pass. Cotton Ball continued her histories of neighbours this, that, and the other, as long as Mrs. Shenkin was pleased to purchase any of her goods; but when she perceived that no more money was forthcoming, she prepared to take her departure. Sally then entered, saying, that she wanted some "cottons

and needles, and 'oorsted," during the purchase of which articles she contrived to whisper to Cotton Ball that Rachel was expecting her down the road; and then, with the most perfect assurance, said aloud that "she wished Rachel wasn't off to the field with master's dinner, for she knew she wanted some needles or so." Off trotted Cotton Ball, walking as quickly when she left the farm as she had walked when she came to it. She was met by Rachel, who entreated her to say at once what was the matter with her father.

"Oh! not much, Rachel Bach," was the answer. "Don't be frightened—he's been a little ailing and weak lately, that's all. Young William Davies (a blush from Rachel) happened to be sitting with him when I saw him yesterday. I said I was coming to Grongar to-day, and he managed to leave and to wait for me out in the lane. He told me to tell you that he thought if you could come home for a day it might do your father good; for, though he wouldn't own it, or let you be sent for, he was pining to see you. William told me to be sure to say, also, that, if you couldn't come, you might depend upon your father's being well attended to: and I must say that, if he had been Jackey's own son, he couldn't have been more tender-like in his ways. Your father bade me give his love to you, and say he hoped you were well and happy."

Rachel felt as if she were committing a sin in allowing pleasure to mingle with her sorrow for her father's illness; still there was not only pleasure but

hope in the thought that her father was, at least, receiving attention from William. She begged Cotton Ball to give her best and most dutiful love to her father, and to tell William that she would use every endeavour to go home immediately, "and say," she added, "that I am very grateful to him for his kindness to my father." She had a secret hope that William would contrive to see Cotton Ball on the morrow, and that thus her messages would be speedily conveyed. "Tell them I am very well, please, and very ——" She was going to say "happy," but the word would not be articulated.

"Oh yes, my dear," said the good-natured vender of small wares, "I will say every thing that's proper; but if I swore you were happy, nobody would believe it, for there isn't a soul that was ever happy with Mrs. Shenkin yet."

After shaking Rachel warmly by the hand, and telling her "not to fret," Cotton Ball pursued her way, and Rachel returned to the house. She was met by Sally, who said, "Now don't you be going straight to tell claps upon me, if mistress asks you where you 've been. I said you were gone with master's dinner."

"Oh, Sally!" began Rachel, "how I wish ——',

"There now, none of your wishes, only don't you go and play me a bad turn for a good one, that's all."

Rachel was greeted by Mrs. Shenkin with the dreaded question, "Where have you been?" So she resolved, if possible, to get the worst over at once, without compromising her friend. She trembled

from head to foot as she said, "Please, ma'am, I have just seen Cotton Ball."

"Oh! you have, have you, — and what then?" was Mrs. Shenkin's unpromising reply.

"She says my father's very ill, ma'am, and I want to ask leave to go and see him."

Mrs. Shenkin became inflamed. "Never, as long as I live, will I buy another thing of that impudent woman, — to go and tell after all, and I spending shillings and pounds with her!"

"I asked how my father was, ma'am, and she couldn't help telling me," interposed Rachel.

"It's no matter to me who asked or who told, but you shan't go, that's certain. Your father's as well as I am, and it's all a trick made up amongst you. These busy times too; the hay not half in, and every hand wanted. I wonder you can have the face to ask, and you haven't been here six months yet; going to church too every Sunday, whether one will or no. I wonder what one shall hear of next — but *some people* are so bold!"

"If I might go on Sunday, ma'am, and come back early on Monday," suggested Rachel.

"No, you shan't go at all," replied Mrs. Shenkin, with a determined voice. "Go you out to the hay-field immediately, and let me hear no more of this."

Rachel was obliged to submit, for the present at least, and she proceeded, with a heavy heart, to the hay-field. When she arrived there her tears were flowing fast. Mr. Shenkin, kind-hearted little man, perceived

them, and asked what was the matter. Rachel recounted her grievances.

"There, never you cry," he said, in the tone of determination he was known occasionally to assume in the absence of his wife; "take my word for it, you shall go home between this and Sunday. Don't you be fretting or talking to your mistress about it, only wait patiently till Sunday, and by that day you shall go to Jackey Bach, please God we're all alive."

Rachel had not much faith in Mr. Shenkin's promises, or at least in his power to keep them, still she had no alternative but to wait patiently until she saw whether there were any probability of their being fulfilled. Mrs. Shenkin's resolutions she knew were always obstinately adhered to, and only strengthened by opposition. Cotton Ball had visited Grongar on a Monday, and Rachel thought that the days which intervened between it and Sunday would never pass. Every minute seemed an hour. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday crept by, and her hopes diminished with them, for Mr. Shenkin evidently had not mentioned the subject to his wife, who, as evidently, had no intention of revoking her determination.

On the Thursday evening, previous to the chairing of the members, the day's haymaking being done, Mr. Shenkin was seen to walk towards the village. Nine, ten, eleven o'clock struck, and he did not return. Now as no one knew whither he was gone, it is not astonishing that Mrs. Shenkin, accustomed as she was not only to be informed of her husband's actions but to rule them, should be filled with sur-

prise, not to say displeasure, at this unprecedented conduct. The two men were sent in search of him, and returned, saying, that he was gone to Farmer James's, Llandewy, to meet a party. Llandewy was nearly five miles off, and as Mrs. Shenkin found it inconvenient to go and fetch him, which she ardently desired to do, she consoled herself by giving loose to her tongue; indeed her whole body had no rest. Now she walked up and down the room, talking with extreme volubility the while; now she went out of doors to see whether her refractory husband were approaching; and now she returned to the house to pour forth her complaints anew.

"This was what he was plotting all the week then — this was why James Llandewy and he were putting their heads together — this was why he 'my deared' me twenty times as much as usual! I wonder what will come next? He shall pay for it, he shall. James Llandewy, too,—as big a Red as ever breathed. I shouldn't wonder but he'll be going to the election next; but I'll take care of that, won't I, that's all. And you too, Rachel and Sally, I dare say you knew all about it, but didn't choose to tell."

Rachel and Sally had been attentive but quiet auditors of all Mrs. Shenkin's proceedings, the former scarcely knowing which way to look, the latter in her glory, making the most extraordinary grimaces, and rubbing her hands every time Mrs. Shenkin's back was turned. Sally's reply, when appealed to by her mistress, was, "'Deed, ma'am, I never knew a word about it. *I* wouldn't for the world hurt your

feelings; but I should never have thought master would have gone; I should as soon think of his going to the 'lection to-morrow itself, and I'm sure all of us is the same. Dear me! I dare say he's enjoying himself famous though over there. 'Tis a capital place to go to — all Reds, I'll warrant me. Not a Blue dare show his nose at Farmer James's, Llandewy."

Mrs. Shenkin looked furious. "Hold your tongue directly," she said: "what do you know about it? Go you to bed both of you, and mind you, don't you let any body into this house to-night: I'll do that if I choose."

Off went the girls to bed, whilst Mrs. Shenkin perambulated the house, barred and locked every door and window, and secured every inlet so well that even Mr. Shenkin, diminutive as he was, could not have entered. Having taken these measures, she chuckled, and said to herself, "He may find a bed in the hay-loft if he likes; but he shan't come in here to-night, that's certain." She then proceeded up stairs, and went to bed, but not to sleep, for she kept herself awake by imaginary conversations, not of a very amicable nature, between Mr. Shenkin and herself.

Rachel is also a watcher, but from a different cause. She is thinking of her father, and imagining a thousand evils. He might be dangerously ill — she might never see him again — he might be reproaching her for not coming to him — in short, she has fancied so many "he mights," that she is making up her

mind to go and see him at all risks, when she is aroused from her meditations by a violent knocking at the house door. Up jumps Sally.

"There's master! Now for it! now for it! won't he catch it, that's all?"

She is at the window in a minute, but the morning is too dark and misty to allow of her distinguishing any external objects. Her ears are quick enough, however, and so are her mistress's. Mrs. Shenkin continues to keep in bed, whilst loud knock on knock and kick on kick resound, and she wonders how Mr. Shenkin can have the courage to make such a noise.

"Hillo! Mrs. Shenkin! open the door," cries a voice in very loud tones.

Can it possibly be Mr. Shenkin's? It calls again, and Mrs. Shenkin thinks it is a strange voice — another appears to join with it — who can it be? Mrs. Shenkin jumps out of bed and steals gently towards the window. Nothing to be seen there, but a conversation is evidently carrying on below, and laughter is audible. She thinks she hears Mr. Shenkin's small "he, he, he," but she dares not assure herself by opening the window, for it creaks so terribly, and she does not choose to speak yet. A few more kicks and a loud "Hollo, Mrs. Shenkin" from several voices. An "open the door, my dear," assures her that Mr. Shenkin is present, but what he can be doing with so many people she cannot conceive. She listens attentively, and fancies she can distinguish Farmer James's voice saying,

"Hollow louder, Shenkin, are you afraid?"

Mr. Shenkin mutters something, and attempts another "open the door, my dear. They sleep very sound in general," he adds.

"So it seems," ejaculates a gruff voice, which Mrs. Shenkin immediately recognises as proceeding from a certain Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, a man of consequence, upon whom she has ever looked with much respect and some awe, because he farms his own estate and has plenty of money, — arguments that must conciliate even a Mrs. Shenkin.

"Never saw a man locked out of his own house before. I'll take care how I get married," says a fresh voice, with a laugh, in which every one seems to join; but Mr. Shenkin's small "he, he, he," is not heard, drowned probably in the general chorus.

"Let's go on to the election, and fetch out the horses again: go and saddle yours, Shenkin," says the gruff-voiced Mr. Thomas.

One more kicking at the door, and a general "Hollo, Mrs. Shenkin," succeed in *awaking* the mistress of the mansion from her slumbers, who, at last, opens the window.

"Who's there?" she cries, in tones that she could not if she would render dulcet.

"It's me, my dear, and Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, and Mr. James, Llandewy, and Farmer Rees, Llasendi, and — and — and we've all been here knocking and calling this half-hour." Mr. Shenkin ejaculates this in a voice that means to be determined, but that trembles a little upon the word hour.

"Not very hospitable, Mrs. Shenkin," says Mr.

Thomas, "keeping your friends out of doors at this time of night."

"Why, it's an odd hour for visiting, Mr. Thomas," replies Mrs. Shenkin, "but I'll dress and come down directly."

Mrs. Shenkin was one of those persons who accustom themselves to lose no time in adorning the exterior. Some four or five minutes generally sufficed her for this purpose; but then, to be sure, she was not over-fond of cold water at an early hour, and had not a particularly good stock of brushes and combs. On the present occasion she was even more expeditious than usual, and put on her best cap into the bargain. She opened the door, and had to shake hands with the portly Mr. Thomas and her other friends, during which operation Mr. Shenkin slid into the house.

"We're taking you by surprise, ma'am," said Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, "but we're all on our way to the election, and as no good Red ought to think of sleeping to-night, we accepted Shenkin's invitation to make this a half-way house, so here we are, you see."

"Oh! to be sure," said Mrs. Shenkin in no very promising tones; but she set about renewing the fire, and a blaze was soon kindled. She then placed bread and cheese, meat and beer upon the table, endeavouring to kill her husband by a look the while, but he pertinaciously averted his eye.

Little Mr. Shenkin was little no longer. Supported by very influential friends, and potations of strong beer, he was another man. He told his wife

that he intended to go to the election, and thought she had much better go too. The mare would carry her and Rachel capitally, for it was but fair that Rachel should have a holiday, particularly as she wanted to see her father. During this speech Mr. Shenkin did not once venture to look his wife in the face, for he *felt* what he should encounter; so did his friends, who were enjoying the joke. But who can describe the conflicting passions with which Mrs. Shenkin's breast was ruffled? Why this was rebellion, downright rebellion! and that in a quarter where she least expected it. Rage and fear struggled for the mastery. She took up the loaf as if she intended to throw it at something, but she changed her mind and put it down again. She looked alternately at her husband and the portly Mr. Thomas. The former seemed strangely altered, and was apparently careless of what she either did or said; the latter looked so provokingly composed that she knew any attack upon him would be worse than useless: besides, he was a rich gentleman-farmer, and farmed his own estate. James of Llandewy and his son, too, were contemplating her struggles with such malicious eyes, that she scarcely knew what course to pursue.

She was determined to quit the field with honours, if possible, so with a glance of extreme contempt, she said, "*I* go to the election indeed! *I* go to see two Reds chaired! Reds truly! that do us no good any way either at home or abroad; that pick our pockets to get high rents and tithes when they are in the country, and, when they get up to London,

lay their heads together to make the times harder than they already are. I wonder you ain't all ashamed of yourselves, I do. It's time for all decent people to be nearly getting up, much less in bed, and here are you smoking and drinking. But good night, or good morning, whichever you like. I wo'n't countenance such doings any longer."

Having delivered this speech, and looked unutterable things at her husband, Mrs. Shenkin flounced out of the room. During the conference below, Sally stationed herself at the head of the stairs, and sucked in every word that passed with greedy ear. All Rachel's whispered entreaties could not make her return.

"Mistress's turn now, thank goodness. Well done master!" she ejaculated, then off she crept to Rachel. "There now, Rachel, get up early, and if you can manage to behave any thing like other folk, you may go to the election and to your father too. I wish 'twas me, that's all: wouldn't I go? yes, sure."

Off to the head of the stairs again, until her mistress's "good night or good morning" sent her to her bed, where she was breathing roughly when Mrs. Shenkin passed the room.

To account for Mr. Shenkin's newly acquired resolution, it must be remembered, in the first place, that he was a Tory. All his friends knew this, and had been long endeavouring to secure him to join them in doing honour to their Tory representatives. They did not scruple to hint that he was too much under petticoat government to venture to the election,

and this supposition wounded his pride, for how decidedly soever a man may be ruled by his wife, he does not like to be reminded of it. Mr. Shenkin was as universally liked as Mrs. Shenkin was disliked. Mr. Thomas and Mr. James formed a plan of carrying off the former *vi et armis*, and thereby annoying the latter. By frequent little manœuvres they so far worked upon Mr. Shenkin's self-esteem as to induce him to say boldly, that "he thought he should go to the election after all, as the hay was likely to be in." They then made him promise to join a party of Reds at Mr. James's, the night preceding the election, which, as has been seen, he contrived to do; and when there, the rest of their scheme was easily accomplished. As they feared the powers of female eloquence upon his yielding mind, they proposed accompanying him home, under pretext of begging Mrs. Shenkin to join their party. This he knew was a useless mark of civility, but he was only too happy to take refuge under the powerful protection of Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, for whom, he knew, his wife entertained great veneration. Mr. Shenkin's courage had slept during the last five years, but being aroused by his friends, and braced up by ale, he resolved to fight his own battles. It is no wonder that after so long lying dormant, it should quail a little at sight of the enemy; nevertheless, it did not succumb, but finally prevailed.

At five o'clock, all were astir as usual at Grongar. Mrs. Shenkin sent Sally to summon her master up stairs.

"Please, master, you're wanted a minute out here," said Sally, as she beckoned Mr. Shenkin outside the house. "Please, sir, there's the cow as just wants looking after before you go, and that sick sheep. Mistress sent me to tell you she wants to see you up stairs, but I'll say you're about the farm, for I dare say there's no hurry — and, master, if you could just manage to take Rachel along, I'll do all the work."

"Tell her to get ready," said Mr. Shenkin, as he walked off to the cow and the sick sheep.

Sally proceeded to her mistress, and informed her "that master was nowhere to be found, but that Tom said he was gone up the hill to the cow," at which Mrs. Shenkin looked incredulous. She then went to Rachel, and bade her "put on her best gown immediately, and keep out of mistress's sight, for master would surely take her."

Rachel was sitting on the side of her bed, half dressed, not knowing what to do. On any other occasion she would not have quitted the house without her mistress's full consent; but now she felt inclined to run any risk to see her father, who, for aught she knew, might be dying. She took up her common dress, intending to put it on, when Sally ran to the chest, and produced her best Sunday flannel one, saying that, "since master gave her leave to go, and was so civil as to take her with him, she ought to dress smart and proper — that was nothing but respectful."

Mrs. Shenkin was obliged to go down stairs to

make breakfast, during which proceeding Mr. Shenkin entered, affecting great unconcern.

"Well, my dear," he said, "we're off, you see. I told Rachel she might take a turn to see her father, as this is a sort of a holiday, and Betty Morris is coming in to help instead. I knew you would have no objections."

"Upon my word, Mr. Shenkin," exclaimed the annoyed wife, "you take great liberties with my servants. I've something else for Rachel to do than to go flaunting about at the election; and what's more, I can't possibly let her go."

"Oh! but my dear, Betty will do just as well for once in a way. Oh! here she comes. I told her to be up early.—Come in, Betty. As I was saying, my dear, Rachel can go as far as the turning to Jackey Bach's behind me, which will be a great help to her, for old Bob will carry double as well as any horse in the country. Sally, go you quick, and tell Rachel to get ready, for we shall be off directly."

Mr. Shenkin was resolved, by a grand effort, to prove to his friends that he *could* drive, when he chose to take the reins in his own hands, and he therefore assumed an air and tone of decision so unlike his usual submissive manner, that he produced the desired effect upon his wife, who was, for once, silenced from pure astonishment. She looked at her brave little husband, who, with his hands in his pockets, steadily returned her gaze, saying as he did so, "I'm so sorry you won't come, my dear — but,

Mr. Thomas, she's got such an odd dislike to us Reds, that there's no conquering it; and ladies are obstinate in such matters sometimes you know — indeed I always say they are the hottest politicians after all. I must just go and see to the horses — do you begin breakfast, and I'll be back directly." And off walked Mr. Shenkin, with a step worthy of an Alexander, and a *veni, vidi, vici* sort of glance at his delighted friends.

Mrs. Shenkin felt herself boiling with passion, but still pride kept her from boiling over. She would not abandon all self-control before Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, and Mr. James, Llandewy. She was, in truth, afraid lest Mr. Shenkin's audacity should prevail, and she become the laughing-stock of Llangathen; in short, she was, for the first time during her wedded life, conquered by her husband.

The breakfast over, the horses were brought to the door, and Rachel made her appearance. She did not dare to look at her mistress, who told her in a tone that she could not misunderstand, "that she had best be back early." Mr. Shenkin mounted his horse, and the young Mr. James gallantly helped Rachel up behind him. The portly Mr. Thomas and Mr. James followed their example. They wished Mrs. Shenkin good morning, but that lady did not condescend to appear at the door. With a bow of red ribbon each in their coats, and smiles on their faces, they set off for the scene of action, leaving Sally, the baby, Betty Morris, Tom, and Bill grinning at one another, and staring at them by turns

until they were out of sight.—"I wish I was going too," said Sally, with a dejected air.

The party had a merry ride, Mr. Shenkin having determined to leave care behind him. Rachel alone was sad and silent, for though all were kind to her, and attentive to her comfort, she felt unhappy and ill at ease. When they reached the turning to her native village, her master asked her if she would like to go on and see the chairing first, and then return to her father.

"Oh no, thank you, sir; I would rather go straight home," was the reply.

"You're a good girl, Rachel, a very good girl, and I'll come and fetch you to-night, that you may lose no time with your father, and then I can just look in upon my old friend Jackey."

Rachel thanked her master, and with a modest courtesy took leave of her companions, who all wished her a very kind "good day," and hoped she would find her father better. Once on her road homeward she felt her spirits lightened of half their load, whilst her eager thoughts winged her steps to her father's humble dwelling.

No. XI.

THE ELECTION.

ALAS for the electioneerers! at nine o'clock it was raining a thick, drizzling rain. What pen shall paint the disappointment of the inhabitants of our town, as they gazed from their windows upon hills disappearing in the mist, and a heavily clouded sky. The houses, too, looked as dismal as brick and mortar could look. Even the carriages appeared sulky despite their red ribbons*; and, unless long faces, miserable attempts at a laugh, and closely-buttoned surtouts are indications of pleasure, their inmates were certainly anything but pleased. The members, also, notwithstanding the good hearty breakfast with which they were fortifying themselves, were doubtless looking forward with melancholy forebodings to their approaching procession. The ladies, always compassionate, and careful of the health of all creatures, whether bipeds or quadrupeds, were lamenting the catarrhs and coughs which must descend upon their hapless bare heads, as they passed through their constituents; and nothing but "dear mes—

* Red is the Tory, and blue the Whig colour in Carmarthenshire.

how provokings — how tiresomes — and how disagreeables," were heard on all sides. Every body, and every thing in the town, wore a gloomy air. Whigs predominated amongst the inhabitants, and it may be easily imagined, that the return of two Conservative members did not excite universal mirth. It is true the adverse party *did* endeavour to look unconcerned, and *did* amuse themselves by pulling their opponents' persons and politics to pieces; still a defeated party cannot be quite as much at ease as a successful one. There had been no contest, consequently the passions had not been brought out, and excitement was wanting. All was dull and quiet. The very bells seemed to be rheumatic, and *would* not ring out a merry peal, but after several attempts gradually subsided into a drowsy chime.

An election, however, always collects a great number of people; and despite the cheerless aspect of the morning, all orders in the neighbourhood flocked in to see the show. Every vehicle, from a carriage and four to a market cart, was out; and every horse, from the prancing steed to the plodding carter, was on duty. From nine till eleven nothing but rain and expectation — but at eleven the sun gravely and slowly reveals his face. The clouds disperse, and the countenances clear up with the weather. The procession begins to wind through the park, and very gay the line of carriages and horses, with flags and ribbons, look under the oaks and along the green fields. But hark! fits of music come on the breeze, and horns and fifes are distinctly heard.

'Tis "the march of the men of Harlech," in enthusiastic vigour; and now a full cheer hails the members from the townsfolk. From the school-house to the market-place are suspended garlands of evergreens and flowers, adorned with endless bows of red and orange ribbon. The members in a carriage and four, attended by their friends and supporters, pass under the floral arch, and bow until their necks must ache. A short street brings them to the Town Hall, where they are to be proposed and accepted as honourable members for the county. I have nothing to do with the eloquent speeches of the friends of Toryism, but leave them to the county journalists, who generally make the best they can of them. I doubt not that there are some, "unaccustomed to public speaking," who hem and haw and labour much with little matter, whilst others say their say with becoming dignity.

What a sale of red ribbons Mr. Lewis, "the shop," must have enjoyed, for red bows, of every variety of size and shape, appear on all sides. Nothing but red is to be seen. Red gowns, red trimmings, red roses, red faces. Even Betty Tock is attired in the prevailing colour, and with a red handkerchief over her head, upon which her best hat is placed in the most becoming taste, manifests herself Toryism to the tail of her red jacket, which she reserves for elections, an especial gift of "The Ladies." By her side are two little maidens, who have adorned their Conservative red hair with bunches of red ribbons; and not far off is her friend Mary Patch, with a twenty-

year-old red bow upon her very ancient short flannel gown.

Who are those two sheepish-looking people, swaggering down the pavement with an air of affected indifference? One of them is Nat Lewis, Rachel's old admirer; and there are a few others of the same class scattered here and there, who talk to one another, and cast glances of contempt upon the crowd. If we look at their button-holes, we shall perceive a little piece of blue ribbon peeping through the aperture, as if ashamed to show itself. This is a decided indication of the "Blues," and excites no commiseration from the unfeeling Reds.

But who is this walking with so much dignity down the street, at whom every one gazes? It is no less a personage than Mad Moll followed by a troop of children. Though they torment her without mercy, she seems to enjoy the sport, and retorts upon them with a good-nature equal to their mischief. She is, however, soon left alone and at peace, for, at the sound of a drum, little boys, as well as big men and women, take to their heels.

"Hurrah! hurrah! they're coming, they're coming," is the cry. Every window is crowded with spectators. The members are leaving the hall; but, oh dire disappointment! there is no chairing. The beautiful machine which used to appear, hoisted upon men's shoulders, covered with flowers and evergreens, satins, and gauzes, has given place to two handsome horses, upon which the members are mounted. The expectant crowd look crest-fallen and

dolorous. "God save the Queen" is played — the red flags are visible. "Here are the members — here they are — hurrah! hurrah!" is shouted by the men and little boys. The two handsome horses do their duty, and walk slowly and demurely on, giving their riders time and opportunity to bend gracefully, smile sweetly, and wave their hands with dignity to their fair constituents who grace the surrounding windows. What a display of red bows and white pocket-handkerchiefs from the ladies! How supremely pleased they look! There is not one amongst them who is not convinced that she has been honoured by an especial salutation, whilst the hapless, bare-headed objects of their admiration, know not whether they are saluting ladies or wig-blocks, but are inwardly thinking that they never before knew the full value of a hat and an easy chair.

The members pass on — the gentlemen follow, and a long train of tenants and would-be voters close the procession. Mr. Shenkin is amongst them, and a very pompous little man he looks between Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, and Mr. James, Llandewy. How consequentially he talks, now addressing one, now the other. He has not felt himself so much a man for the last five years. I wonder if he thinks of his wife? but I trow not. If he does, it is certainly in no cowardly spirit, for who *could* be a coward in a victory. If a thought of the reception he may meet on his return home cross his mind, he banishes it, and determines to let the present swallow up the future. By looking narrowly amongst the crowd,

we discover other familar faces; but those of Jackey Bach, William, Rachel, and Pally are not there. Cotton Ball robs half an hour from her rounds to see the chairing, and stands on the pavement yonder by the side of her upright soldier-husband. Old Mary Patch rests on her broom at the door of her wretched hovel, to watch the members pass by, and anticipates a troublesome "sweeping" to-morrow. The corporal stalks after the procession, declaring to every one he meets that they ought to go elsewhere for elections. "'Tis a shame to see such a poor show: pretty Tories too!" he says with a sneer — "Why half a dozen English Blues would give heartier cheers than all us Welshmen here put together. I should like you to hear the thunder of voices I have heard at elections, it would do your hearts good." The corporal is not far from the truth; the people evidently require a Chartist meeting to arouse their energies.

The procession having made its way through all the streets of our *large* provincial town, the different individuals who compose it disperse. The gentlemen adjourn to a luncheon at the school-houses, where Conservatives of both sexes may eat and drink as much as they like. The voters make their way to the different ale-houses, where they follow the good example of their superiors. After allowing a sufficient time to elapse for digestion, dinner parties assemble at the different inns, where meat and drink, those alternate rousers and calmers of John Bull's excitable feelings, are again the order of the day. Speeches are either made or spoilt in the making —

healths drunk, and jollity kept up. All are as merry as a successful party and plenty of wine can make them. The members are praised and flattered, and are, consequently, in good-humour with themselves and those around them.

Whilst these proceedings are going on within doors, a very different scene is enacting without. More cheers are audible than have been heard during the whole day before, and a considerable crowd is assembled. An erudite Chartist is addressing the late Conservative populace, and eliciting marks of approbation from the *loyal* Reds as well as from the discomfited Blues. He is dressed in a fustian jacket, in which figures a very large bow of dirty blue ribbon; a sailor's hat slouches over one side of his head, and a blue neck-kerchief encircles his neck; he stands on the church-yard wall, by the post-office, and waves his hand and hat to the admiration of the bystanders. After addressing his new friends for some time, the stranger, for he is no inmate of our town, descends amidst enthusiastic cheers, and gives place to another of his clique. The latter, however, elicits no particular symptoms of approbation, and his predecessor again "takes the wall." Cheers greet his return; and "that's it — very true, indeed — 'tis a burning shame — right enough — too bad" — and the like interjectional phrases are heard from the crowd. His admiring auditors are so charmed with his eloquence, that a chair is procured, into which the new member complacently seats himself, and is borne by four of his principal constituents triumphantly round the

town. Never did king on his coronation-day bend and smile more sublimely than does our friend of the blue bow on the present occasion. Tottering on the shoulders of his supporters, he is conscious of nothing but of acquired dignity. Short-lived, however, is his triumph. An hour or two passes, and he is seen walking alone and crest-fallen through the streets that had witnessed his elevation. An occasional glance from beneath his slouched hat tells that he is still looking for followers and applause; but his late admirers have found a pleasing variety in the ale-house, and he is left alone. The corporal approaches him with a sneer: —

"I hope you liked your chairing! Very fine thing to be member for a mob, ain't it? You looked uncommon grand in the chair, too: d'ye think they'll vote for you at the next election?"

The man looks very morose, and the corporal walks homeward, whither it may not be amiss to accompany him, in order to discover what has become of Rachel.

We left her in the morning, on her way to her father. It was early when she parted from Mr. Shenkin, and she anticipated the happiness of a long day at home; but even in the moment of expectation and hope began the dread of the necessity of separation. Thus we frequently cast a shadow over our present happiness, by thinking of its termination. How quickly did Rachel's heart beat as she approached the little village in which she had been born and bred, and where every body loved her.

How strangely she felt when she passed the corporal's house, and how earnestly she hoped she might just see William, to thank him for his kindness to her father. No William appeared, however, and she hastened on, not wishing to be recognised, lest she should be detained on her way home. She peeped into Pally's cottage, but did not see her old friend. She reached the court before her own dear home; there were the chickens and ducks she used to feed, pecking and dabbling as of old, — she could not resist calling them; and when she saw her tortoiseshell cat stretched upon the stone seat by the window, she stooped to stroke her, and the little creature purred as she did so. She peeped into the window at which her rose-tree stood covered with roses; she did not see her father — where was he? A joyful bark met her ear, and a dog jumped upon her, — it was William's. "Poor Rover," she said, as he licked her hand. Her finger was on the latch of the door, but she could not open it, so violently did her heart throb. The dog continued to bark and jump around her. She felt the door opening from within; she let go the latch, and stood upon the threshold, with one hand on the dog's head.

"Be quiet, Rover," said a voice, as the door half opened. It opened wider. "Rachel!" said the voice, in a tone of delighted astonishment, and her hand was firmly clasped between both William's.

"My father?" said Rachel, enquiringly; but scarcely had the words escaped her lips when she heard his voice, saying —

"Rachel! where is she; what do you mean?"

It proceeded from the bed; she rushed towards it.

"Here father — dear, dear father," she exclaimed, as she leant over her parent, and kissed him fervently.

"Thank God!" he said, but with so feeble a tone that it startled her. He was overcome by her sudden arrival. His face was pale and his eyes were closed.

"Father, dear father, what is the matter?" she cried; "what have I done — speak: he is dead. O God! have mercy upon me."

Here Pally, who had been at the other end of the room, stepped forward, and said, "Hush, Rachel! you've made him faint for joy; 'tis only weakness."

William drew Rachel gently from the bed, whilst Pally poured a spoonful of medicine into some water and gave it to her father, who revived, asking, as he did so, for Rachel. She went to him. He stretched out his hand towards her. She knelt by his bedside, and pressed it in her own.

"Thank God!" he said again; "don't be frightened, Rachel, I'm better now. The sight of you was too much for me. There, sit down, child, and let me look at you."

She sat by him, and was deeply grieved and shocked to behold the change that sickness had made in his ruddy and healthy face. His hand, too, was not the hard broad hand she had pressed when she parted with him six months before, but was shrunk and almost white. She could not have believed that her father could have thus altered in so short a period.

She questioned him concerning his illness, but he made light of it, and said he was getting better. His weak voice, short dry cough, and feeble appearance, belied his words. She looked round to ask Pally or William what was the matter with him, but the latter, with true delicacy, had left the house and taken Pally with him, when he saw that Jackey had recovered.

"Where is William?" inquired Jackey.

"I believe he has left, father," replied Rachel, scarcely knowing whether to feel glad or sorry at his departure, fearing that she might not be able to give him her treasured thanks; still she felt how considerate he was.

By degrees she obtained from Jackey the account of his illness. He had taken a "chill," that universal name for every severe indisposition amongst the country people, and had not allowed himself to lie by, but had continued to work as usual, till within the last week. Pally and William had entreated him to take some medicine, or to ask a doctor's advice, but he was an obstinate man, and would not do either. He was suspicious of William, and repaid his constant kindness by repulsive and cold answers; whilst his contempt for women of all ages prevented his following Pally's advice. The corporal forgot his old animosity when he saw his friend looking ill, and begged him to get some "doctor's stuff;" but his interference rather did harm than good. In short, Jackey's obstinacy threw him into a very precarious state of health, and he was finally obliged to give up,

and remain indoors, in spite of himself. During the last week, and since Rachel's interview with Cotton Ball, he had become feverish and very weak. Though ashamed to own it, even to himself, he had been pining for Rachel, indeed had never been happy since he parted with her. The doctor ordered him to take great care of himself, as he feared his symptoms were those of rheumatic fever. He complained of violent pains in his limbs, and could with difficulty move about, though he still persisted in getting up every day. He told Rachel that Pally was very good to him, and that William was the best young man that ever lived.

"Before he goes to his work in a morning, Rachel," he said, "and when he comes home to dinner, he looks in upon me, and sees to every thing I want, just as you would do. He spends most of his evenings here, reading to me, or perhaps talking about you, or doing something kind for me."

In short, William had gone far towards winning Jackey's heart as well as his daughter's, and Rachel's hopes unconsciously brightened. Pally came in the course of an hour to embrace Rachel, and to tell her that she looked so "hearty," as to appear a different creature from the pale girl she used to be. She placed her at the foot of her father's bed, and turned her round and round, with expressions of admiration, which were echoed by Jackey. He, poor man, was so exhausted by pleasure and pain, as to be unable to rise from his bed; and Rachel had the sorrow of witnessing his sufferings, which, much as he at-

tempted to conceal them, were but too apparent in his drawn face, and hard, painful breathing. He was evidently suffering from rheumatic fever; and when the doctor arrived, he told Rachel that he was glad to see her at home, as her father would require all her care and nursing. The words sounded bitterly on her ears; for she knew too well that it would be impossible for her to remain with him, or at least she feared that no efforts of hers would induce Mrs. Shenkin to allow her to leave Grongar, even for a day. She followed the good-natured doctor into the little court, and begged him to tell her what he thought of her father. He assured her that he saw no dangerous symptoms then, but that the disease had been so long neglected as to make violent remedies necessary. He feared, he said, that considerable time must elapse before his patient could recover, but he hoped that a daughter's attention would prevent his prescriptions from being neglected, and do much to restore him. Rachel's tears were flowing very fast, and the kind-hearted doctor endeavoured to reassure her, but he did not know the real source of her grief, and therefore was unsuccessful. He rode off, and William made his appearance.

"I am sorry to meet you again this way, Rachel," he said, "but please God, your father will get better yet: don't take it to heart, for the doctor has great hopes of him."

"Oh, William!" sobbed Rachel, "I wouldn't mind so much if I was sure of staying to nurse him, but perhaps Mrs. Shenkin will force me to go back to

Grongar, and leave him, ill as he is—and then—perhaps—oh, William! I cannot bear to think of it!"

"She wouldn't have the heart to do it, Rachel, no woman could; so don't think about it, pray."

"Indeed I don't know, William: Mrs. Shenkin doesn't like to be thwarted: but I am losing the time that——" here Rachel hesitated and blushed deeply, whilst William looked at her anxiously and earnestly. "William," she resumed, "I cannot thank you as I ought, for all you have done for my poor father. I cannot tell you as I ought, how grateful I am; but God knows how much I feel your kindness, and He will bless you for it."

William would have answered, but he could not: he would have said that he should gladly have done more, a thousand times more, to receive the thanks he had just received; that for Rachel's father, or for any one belonging to her, he would have gone through fire and water; but he only looked at her, and wished he could tell her all he felt. Rachel returned to the house, and William followed her. Jackey stretched out his hand towards the latter as he entered, and looking at Rachel, said, "He has done almost as much for me as you could have done, and you must thank him for it." As he withdrew his arm, the motion caused him such violent pain that he almost screamed. He was suffering severely, and during the whole of the day appeared to become worse rather than better.

Towards evening Rachel began to dread the arri-

val of Mr. Shenkin, and sat looking alternately at her poor father and the clock, until about eight, when he arrived. The little man alighted from his horse, and went into the cottage to see Jackey. He found him so altered by illness that he scarcely recognised him.

"Bless my heart!" he exclaimed: "dear me! what's the matter, Jackey Bach? Why, Rachel, girl, what's the matter?"

"My father is very ill, Sir," replied Rachel, "and I scarcely know how I can leave him: do you think my mistress could spare me for a few days? I am sure Sally would do every thing she could for me, and Betty Morris might help: I would gladly pay her."

"To be sure, to be sure," said the still valiant Mr. Shenkin. "Mrs. Shenkin *could* have no objection, I am sure. Stay you to-night, Rachel, at least; and to-morrow we shall see—we shall see."

"Thank you, Sir, thank you," said Rachel, with grateful joy. "Please to tell my mistress I will make up for it any way I can. Oh! I am so much obliged to you."

"And so am I," murmured Jackey. "Nobody knows how good 'tis to have one's own child about one in sickness."

"Good-by, now, Jackey," said Mr. Shenkin, shaking his friend somewhat too roughly by the hand; "I hope you'll soon be better. Mr. James, Llandewy, and some other friends are waiting for me, and have promised to take a bit of supper with me on their

way home, so I must be off. Good-by, my old boy, cheer up!"

The little man shuffled out of the house, leaving Rachel with feelings of great thankfulness, though not unmingled with regret, for she knew that, determined as her master now appeared, she should be the unwilling cause of much discomfort to him. She gave not a thought to herself, though she might well have anticipated many evils, knowing, as she did, that she was in Mrs. Shenkin's power, and knowing also that that power was ever exercised in the most arbitrary manner. She soon, however, forgot every thing in her attendance upon her father, whose fever increased alarmingly during the night, and whose sufferings kept her from her rest. Morning brought Pally and William; the latter of whom, previously to beginning his daily labour, set off to request the doctor to call and see Jackey during the morning.

No. XII.

JACKEY'S "COMING."

THE word "coming" in Wales, like "settling" in America, is one of universal acceptation: it is applied in fifty different ways, and does not alone mean the action of moving from place to place, for you may be *coming* without even the intention of motion. The butter *comes* in some parts of England when it is beginning to form from the cream; but in Wales, not only butter and cheese, but every other inanimate object, *comes*. If you speak to a man of the state of his crops, his trees, his garden, he will tell you at once that they are *coming*. The frost has nipped some of his cabbages, but they're "*coming* again famous now;" or the potatoes are "*coming fine*," or the "*leeks* are *coming beautiful*." Cows, pigs, ducks, geese, and chickens, all *come*, if they thrive at all; and as to men, women, and children, they are for ever *coming*. Praise a boy for his good writing, and he tells you, with a pleased smile, "Oh! yes, I think it'll *come*;" whilst a father says that his child is "*coming* capital at his book." The consolation in cases of illness is always, "Never you mind, he'll *come* yet;" and when you are creeping from one room to another for the first time after long and severe indisposition, you are told

that you are "*coming beautiful*," though your legs scarcely support you, from weakness. If you venture a remark upon some wretched little sickly infant, you are answered by a "yes sure, he's *coming* nice now." Cripples and bed-ridden persons never cease *coming*, and, in short, every person and thing in Wales *comes*, excepting the waiters at inns, who never *come* when they are called.

Poor Rachel is put almost out of her senses by this convenient word. After watching a whole night by her father's bedside, and feeling wretchedly uneasy about him, the neighbours throng in to visit them. They first of all remark upon her improved looks, and with genuine good-will and friendly feeling, express their pleasure at seeing her again; then they turn to her father, and begin to condole with her upon his condition. The favourite expressions, "dear me — poor thing — yes, sure" — and "indeed," interlard the conversation; but the words "come" and "coming" are the pith and marrow of it. One says, "Poor thing! he's uncommon long *coming*;" another, "Don't fret, Rachel Bach, he'll *come* yet;" a third, less consolatory, "Dear me, I wonder whether he'll *come*." "Indeed I don't know," replies a fourth: "people don't *come* easy out of them chills." "Oh! don't say so," interposes a fifth: "Davvy Lewis, the mason, was very bad in one, and he's *coming* famous." "Yes, sure," adds a sixth, "and Jackey may *come* too, though he *is* very bad, to be sure."

These remarks were carried on in that half-whisper which is supposed to be inaudible to some certain

member or members of the company, but which is really heard by all. Rachel became uncomfortable, and Jackey impatient. He began to mutter half sentences concerning "women's tongues," which Pally overheard, and politely hinted to the company that they were too numerous for the invalid. But what avail hints to a dozen good-natured women? They *will* be useful, and if their hands cannot be of service they make up for the deficiency by their tongues. Jackey was reduced to the necessity of yielding to women, and a dire one it was. He was too feeble to utter what was burning in his breast, but muttered some indistinct words; upon hearing which, his tormentors shook their heads, and predicted delirium. In vain Pally said, "There, go you, Nanny Corporal, just now, for 'tis time for the draught;" or "*praps* you'll look in again by and by, when he's quieter, Mary Davies." All her efforts but made them more anxious to be useful, and more profuse in their offers of assistance to Rachel.

In the midst of their condolences, in came the doctor, and unceremoniously put an end to the strife of tongues, by sending them all away excepting Pally, and by plainly telling them that his patient must be kept perfectly quiet, and that only one person besides his daughter must be with him at a time. He looked very grave when he felt Jackey's pulse, and told Pally that decided danger existed, but that all might be well if he got over the night without any great increase of fever. He bade Rachel remain with her father at all risks, which she determined to do. She

wrote a few lines of humble entreaty to Mrs. Shenkin, explained the reason of her prolonged absence, and declared her willingness to submit to any lengthened residence in her house, provided she might be permitted to stay with her father at the present time.

The question now was, how could she get her note conveyed? Grongar was so far off, and every one was at work. There had been for some time a noise in the little street, but Rachel had not heeded it. She now looked out of the door, and saw all the children of the village surrounding poor Mad Moll. She forgot every thing else for the moment, in her eagerness to rescue her from her tormentors, and ran towards the children to tell them how wicked they were to tease an unfortunate mad creature.

"Aint they wicked now?" demanded Moll, as the children shrunk away. "There's for you, you naughty boys," and with the greatest good-humour she took two or three half-rotten apples from her apron, and threw them after them. "I likes half-rotten apples, don't you, Miss Jones?" she added, looking at Rachel; and then espying a beggar, almost as ragged as herself, she again selected three or four of the best of her apples from her apron, and running after him, said, "There, John, there's some apples; take 'em, do, they're very nice." I believe a love for rotten apples is almost peculiar to Mad Moll, as is her habit of addressing every strange man by the name of "John," and every strange woman by that of "Miss Jones."

A sudden thought struck Rachel, and she followed Mad Moll.

"Moll," she said, "where are you going?"

"My name's Mary, Miss Jones: why do you call me Moll?" replied the poor creature, as, with a dignified swing, she turned, and advanced towards Rachel.

"Well, Mary, then, do you remember me? do you remember the bull, and Mrs. Shenkin, and this pincushion?" said Rachel, as she took from her pocket Moll's dirty present.

Moll looked at her for a moment, and then sprang towards her, and began to dance and sing with considerable glee. Rachel put her finger on her lips, and said, "Hush, Mary, my father is very ill."

She ceased instantly, saying, "Poor thing, I hope he'll *come* again soon. You're very good, very good, indeed; not like the servant gals, they're very wicked."

"Where are you going, Mary?" inquired Rachel.

"I don't know; I never know where I go," was the reply.

"Will you go somewhere for me?"

"Yes, sure, all over the world — down where I was nursed — over to Llangathen even."

"That is just where I want you to go," interrupted Rachel: "will you carry this note for me to Mrs. Shenkin, and give it her yourself?"

"Mrs. Shenkin? What! scold — scold — scold."

"Yes; I want very much to stay and nurse my father, and I must ask Mrs. Shenkin's leave: will

you be sure to give it her? See, I kept the pincushion till you came again, because you wished it: I wonder whether you will do what I wish?"

Moll looked at Rachel with an expression of face almost tender, as she said, "Didn't you save me from the bull? and wouldn't I do any thing you asked?" She took the note, and put it carefully in her bosom. "I'll go directly," she said: "good-by, Miss Jones — no — what's your name? — never mind, good-by," and off she walked.

Rachel had her misgivings respecting the fate of her note, and well she might; but she remembered to have heard that when Mad Moll was bent upon doing any particular thing, she seldom rested until she had accomplished it.

When William returned from his day's work, he regretted that he had not been the bearer of the note, as he might have represented to Mrs. Shenkin Jackey's precarious state, and have requested her permission for Rachel to remain with him. There was not, however, much time for vain regrets, nor had they any inclination to speak upon this or any other subject; for Jackey, who had been getting worse during the day, became alarmingly ill as the evening advanced. His fever increased; he was delirious, and talked wildly and incoherently. Pally had left him for a short space, to go home to her little grandchild, and William remained, not liking to leave Rachel alone with her father at such a crisis. The poor girl who had been reading to him, and praying by his bedside, during his intervals of composure,

now stood with her eyes either fixed upon him, or upturned, in inward supplication, to Heaven. Neither William nor herself spoke. The sufferer frequently mentioned their names in an incoherent manner, and appeared to be upbraiding himself for some act of cruelty of which he had been guilty. Rachel knelt by the bedside, and took his burning hand in hers, whilst William stood opposite. He grasped her hand, and the action seemed to recall for a moment his wandering senses. He recognised his child. With a hasty, searching glance, he looked round the room; his eyes finally rested on William. He stretched out his other hand towards him, which William took, and leant over the bed. The old man held both the hands in his for a few minutes, and then appeared to wander again; but, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he slowly drew them towards each other, and pressing them together, murmured a few inaudible words. William sunk upon his knees by the bedside, and firmly clasped the hand of Rachel. He looked at her, but her face was buried in the bed. She sobbed aloud. Not a word was spoken, but William, from the fulness of his heart, breathed a silent prayer for the sufferer, for themselves, for all. It was a solemn, though a mute, compact. The father looked upon them, and there was a temporary consciousness in his eye. He smiled, and again pressed their clasped hands within his own. Words were unnecessary; the heart of each was open to the other, and the wish of the suffering parent was understood alike by both. In-

wardly and fervently did William promise to be every thing to Rachel, but Rachel thought only of her father: her secretly-cherished hopes were forgotten — the consummation of them came not to her mind — she thought only that he must die, and whilst she understood his desire for her happiness was herself miserable.

The delirium returned, and they rose from their knees. Pally entered. Night was coming on, and William prepared to leave.

"May God Almighty bless you, Rachel, and save *his* life!" he said. "If the doctor — if any thing is wanting, call me — send Pally for me."

The tears stood in his eyes as he held Rachel's hand: they were kindly, manly tears, and he was not ashamed of them. There was no word — no allusion to the scene that had just passed; but they felt that they were bound to each other by a bond that could only be severed by death. Another fervent "God bless you, Rachel!" was all that was said, and the cottage door closed upon William, leaving Rachel a sad watcher by her father's sick bed.

It was a dreadful night for her: Pally tried to comfort her, but in vain. A superstitious fear and awe had crept over her, and she felt convinced that her father would die. Pally's attempts at comfort, too, were very comfortless. She brought forward instances of persons whom she had seen in similar complaints. Some had recovered — others had died. Wishing to amuse Rachel, she whispered stories of ghosts and corpse-candles, when, in the stillness of

the night, her father sunk occasionally into a short broken sleep, or, rather, into a state of unconsciousness that could scarcely be called sleep, and from which he started into delirium. Pally's well-meant garrulity had not its desired effect upon Rachel, who, before day dawned, had imagined every evil that could possibly befall her. Towards morning, however, her father became more composed, and Pally and Rachel began to hope that the crisis was past. He wandered still, but there was less of wildness in his wanderings. He frequently called upon his "dear child—his Rachel," in the most affectionate accents, and reproached himself for having sent her from him, entreating some one to fetch her to him, that he might see her once more before he died. It was in vain that Rachel assured him of her presence—he did not recognise her. By degrees he sunk into a more easy, though still interrupted slumber, which made the watchers hope that the violence of the fever was abating: when he awoke from it, Rachel administered a composing draught, which gradually soothed him into a profound sleep. How thankful she felt when she saw his eyes really close, and heard his rambling words cease. Not a sound—not a breath—was audible in the cottage. She had prevailed on Pally to go up to her little room and endeavour to obtain some rest, whilst she continued to watch her father's every movement. With what intense anxiety did she gaze upon him, as, unmindful of the waning rushlight and the dawning day, she sat by his bedside.

The first bright rays of the sun pierced through the curtains, and fell slanting across the bed, casting a faint light upon his flushed face. The sudden change aroused her to thought, and she placed herself near the window, that she might prevent the entrance of any third person. William came, as usual, to pay his early visit of inquiry, but she made him understand by signs that her father slept, and he walked away. Her eyes were heavy, but she would not venture to sleep, continuing her silent watch for two or three hours, when she saw the doctor approaching. She gently and carefully opened the door. He entered, and having looked at Jackey, said that he hoped the worst was over, and that all was going on well. He ordered him to be kept perfectly quiet, and told Rachel that he had no doubt but that her good nursing would soon restore him.

He had just left, when the sound of a horse's hoofs in the little court made Rachel hasten to the door with the intention of begging the rider to advance no further, but to remain in the road. Poor Rachel! she felt ready to sink into the ground, or to hide herself in any remote corner of the world: before her stood the grey mare, and on her back sat —Mrs. Shenkin! She was talking to the doctor.

"How is Jackey Bach, Sir?" she said. The answer was,—

"Better, I hope, and likely to get on, if the worst is really over."

Rachel would gladly have closed the door to gain even a moment's time for thought, but the doctor

had ordered perfect quiet, and she dreaded Mrs. Shenkin's vituperation; she therefore walked towards her, to prevent her entering the cottage. One look was sufficient; she saw rage in every feature of her face. It would be needless and painful to detail the volume of abuse that greeted Rachel: suffice it to say, that Mrs. Shenkin gave her her choice between Grongar and the House of Correction. All Rachel's heart-rending entreaties were of no avail. She represented her father's state — said she was his only child — his only support — that he might die, and that her absence, situated as he was, might be the cause of his death — all that filial tenderness and grief could suggest Rachel urged, to prevail on her obdurate mistress to leave her, if but for a week, with her father; but all was vain. She must be ready in half an hour to return to Grongar, when Mrs. Shenkin would call for her, on her way from a friend's house, whither she was going. The neighbours, and William amongst them, were assembling, and the Corporal, more kind than wise, ventured to intercede. He only added fuel to the flame. William whispered to Rachel, "You must go, Rachel; we will take care of your father, but you dare not stay." Mrs. Shenkin again told Rachel to be ready in half an hour, and with a look that spoke more forcibly than words left the court.

Every one present crowded round Rachel, and with affectionate eagerness proffered their services to her father. Her sobs forbade her replying to their kindness. She pressed the hands that were extended

towards her, and re-entered the house. Her father slept still, and she was thankful for it. She knelt a few minutes by his bedside, and prayed for his restoration, as well as for strength to support whatever trials it might please the Almighty to inflict upon her. She then went to Pally, and briefly narrated what had passed. The old woman put her arms about the unhappy girl, and told her that she "should not go, come what would, come what may." Rachel leant her head upon Pally's shoulder, and gave way a moment to her grief. Recovering herself, she entreated Pally to take care of her father.

"Watch him, Pally," she said, "for my sake — for his own. God will reward you, though I cannot. Oh! what shall I do! — what shall I do! He will awake and look for me, and ask for me, and wonder where I am gone. He will think me undutiful. Oh! tell him that I could not help it — tell him that I would have given worlds to stay with him — tell him that I will come again — but, no! I shan't be able — I know I shan't be able!"

Here poor Rachel wrung her hands with sorrow, but the sound of a horse's hoofs aroused her. It was not yet the grey mare, and a few minutes more remained. Pally uttered every reproach that she could summon to her aid against Mrs. Shenkin, whilst she put on Rachel's hat and shawl. They descended together. Rachel stood like a statue gazing upon her father; she fancied death was in his face, and she should never see him again. There was a slight tap at the door: it was William, and she

went towards him. She feared to awake her father, and they stood outside the door. He promised to acquaint her constantly with her father's progress, and said he would himself visit Grongar to tell her all particulars respecting him.

"William," said Rachel, earnestly, "will you beg the clergyman to call, not as if he was sent for, but as if he came of his own accord?"

William promised. Rachel asked if there were any means of her getting off her year's engagement with Mrs. Shenkin. William said he feared there was none, unless Mrs. Shenkin would agree to it.

"Then," sighed Rachel, "it is hopeless."

A horse was again heard. Rachel returned to her father, leant over him, and pressed her lips on his forehead, shook hands with William and Pally, and with a bursting heart went to meet Mrs. Shenkin. She was soon mounted on the grey mare behind that lady; and, whilst holding her head round to catch the last glimpse of her dear home, was hurried on her way to Grongar.

Mrs. Shenkin's conversation during their ride may easily be imagined, but Rachel was deaf to all she said. Absorbed in her own thoughts and sorrows, she sat heedless of all outward movement or sound. Her heart was with her father, and bitterly she wept as she recalled his pallid features to her mind, and thought that he would surely die, and that she should see him no more in this world. If Mrs. Shenkin said any thing that demanded a reply, Rachel had none to give, since she heard not the question. A

push, and an increased elevation of voice, told her that she was expected to answer, and she muttered a hoarse "yes" or "no," according as the repeated inquiry seemed to demand it, and then sunk again into unconsciousness of all save of her own unhappiness.

Mrs. Shenkin was greatly irritated against her. She would have set out in search of her the previous day upon receiving her note, had not Mad Moll hovered about the house, and, by sundry cunning manœuvres, prevented her. Mr. Shenkin was in great disgrace; but having once felt the importance of being a man, he put as bold a face as he could assume upon the matter, and determined to assert his own power for the future.

When Mrs. Shenkin and Rachel arrived at Grongar, after a weary ride of several miles, the former discovered, for her first misery, that the fat pig was loose. She called aloud, and the sound of her voice reached the kitchen before that of the horse's hoofs, and brought Mr. Shenkin to the door.

"This is how things always go on when I'm out of the way," began the amiable wife; but she was interrupted by her husband's saying, for the first time in his life, —

"I am so glad you are come home—poor little Tommy's very bad indeed, and I can't tell what's the matter with him."

"Every thing's bad, when I chance to go out," muttered Mrs. Shenkin, as she dismounted from her horse, and, followed by Rachel, entered the house.

They found little Tommy struggling and scream-

ing upon Sally's lap, who was endeavouring to coax him into silence by a large lump of loaf sugar. Mrs. Shenkin espied the sugar even before she looked at her child, and at once declared it to have been purloined from her sugar basin, some time before, since she had the keys in her pocket; but the careful housekeeper yielded, for once, to the mother, and she forbore to scold and question Sally, but told her to "go and put the fat pig in the stye." She took the child, and recommended Rachel to "take off her smart clothes, and go about the work that had been waiting for her for the last two days."

Rachel cast a pitying look upon the screaming child, and followed Sally out of the room. Mrs. Shenkin did not think there was any thing the matter with Tommy, but delared he was crying from passion. She tried the efficacy of a slight shaking, when a scream, evidently occasioned by pain, arrested her.

Now Mrs. Shenkin, violent as she was, was not without some of the feelings of a mother. I would not say that she possessed them as they exist in many a female breast, but she loved her child, and was grieved to perceive that he was suffering. She sat down, and placing him on her knees, tried to soothe him into composure. She looked into his face, and saw that it was flushed with a colour like crimson. His eyes were heavy and red with crying. She felt his hands, they were hot and feverish, whilst his whole frame trembled with agitation. He had never been seriously ill, though a sickly infant, and of late, thanks to Rachel, he had thriven wonderfully. She

loved children, and was so gentle and kind to them, that they loved her in return. Tommy had not been slow to perceive where he was best treated, and always cried when he perceived Rachel, until she took compassion upon him.

"I think we had better send for a doctor," suggested Mr. Shenkin, "for I am afraid he is breeding a fever."

Here Rachel entered, pale as death, and with her eyes swollen and red. She had changed her dress, and, though half dead from fatigue, was preparing to set about her work. She came to look at little Tommy, and found him restless and moaning in his mother's arms. He recognised her, and stretched out his little hands towards her, whilst he uttered a faint cry.

"Oh dear! give him to Rachel," said Mr. Shenkin: "she's the best nurse, and Tommy's fondest of her."

"I'd rather keep him myself," returned the mother," pride struggling with her feelings for her child.

But Tommy screamed so violently, that she was obliged to resign him to Rachel, who took him in her arms, and walked gently about with him. He gradually became more composed, and smiled as she sung him one of the sweet airs by which she usually quieted him.

"Don't you think you had better send for the doctor, ma'am?" she asked. "I'm afraid he is very ill."

Mrs. Shenkin assented: a man and horse were at once despatched; and, after waiting in much anxiety

several hours, the same doctor arrived who had visited Jackey in the morning. When he saw the child, he asked immediately whether he had been vaccinated or inoculated. No — Mrs. Shenkin had disapproved of both these operations.

"Oh then," said the doctor, "I am afraid your little boy is breeding the small pox." And so it proved.

No. XIII.

CHANGES.

RACHEL was not one of those sentimental young people who think it a duty to dedicate themselves to grief when they feel oppressed by it. She was too actively benevolent to consider herself, when she could be of service to others. No one who knew her, indeed no one who looked at her, could doubt that her heart was heavy with sorrow. Her poor father was never from her thoughts, and she would have relinquished all earthly hope of the future to be with him, and to show him the depth of a daughter's love. She never felt such entire affection for him as she did, when fear that he would not recover found its way into her mind. Her love seemed to have gained double power over her, when she remembered the thousand little deeds of parental kindness that had escaped from him in his rough way; and she felt as if she should never be happy again if he were taken from her. She *could* have sat down to weep in some remote corner of the house, where the sun-beams would not come to mock her affliction; but with a weary body and mind she proceeded to do her duty. And what was that? To repay good for evil, and to devote herself to the suffering child of a

woman who denied her the melancholy satisfaction of watching by the bedside of a parent whom she believed to be dying — to expose herself to a dreadful disease, which, if it left her with life, might be expected to deform and scare her young loveliness — in a word, to act a Christian's part in a Christian spirit. And Rachel did not think herself a heroine — she did not imagine that she was doing any thing deserving even of praise; yet is there heroism in total forgetfulness of injuries, and self-sacrifice.

Sally entreated her to "leave the troublesome child to his mother, who was the best nurse for him;" adding, "that *she* wouldn't go to get the small-pox, though she wasn't half as good-looking as Rachel;" to which Rachel merely replied, that since the child was happy with no one but herself, she could not leave him. It was true that Master Tommy would neither take food nor medicine from any hand but Rachel's. He was too restless and feverish to lie in bed, and Rachel was the only one who could soothe him into any thing like rest. A fire was lighted in the best room, where she was established with her little charge, who was alarmingly ill, and became the following day much worse. Mr. and Mrs. Shenkin were almost frantic; and the mother broke forth in the latter to the astonishment of those, even, who knew her best, for all the violence of her nature merged into maternal apprehension. The disease was of a very virulent kind, and the doctor despaired of the child's recovery. Night after night, and day after day, did Rachel attend him, in spite of the

doctor's warnings that she would kill herself if she persisted. Her question always was,—

"Can he recover, Sir, if he doesn't take your medicines, and if all your orders are not attended to?"

"Certainly not, without a miracle," was the answer.

"Then, Sir, I *must* nurse him."

The doctor brought her frequent accounts of her father, sometimes favourable, at others unfavourable. William also visited her once, but no sooner had they met and spoken than she was summoned up stairs by Mrs. Shenkin, who could do nothing with the child. She had only time to bid William a hasty farewell, who, shocked at her worn-out and haggard appearance, turned to Mr. Shenkin, and plainly told him that he thought they were sacrificing her life as well as her father's.

Mr. Shenkin cried like a child, and said, "My little boy will die without Rachel. I am sure he will die; and Mrs. Shenkin wouldn't hear of sparing her—you don't know what it is to be a father, young man."

"But Jackey Bach does, Sir," replied William, with bitterness.

The evident sorrow of Mr. Shenkin, however, stopped his tongue, whilst his commendations of Rachel softened his heart.

"She is the best girl that ever lived," he said, "and my missus thinks so, by this time, I'm sure."

"A deal too good for her," muttered a voice in the corner of the room, which proved to be Sally's.

Here Mrs. Shenkin entered, and William spoke to her of Jackey. He said that he was very ill, and that it was doubtful whether he could ever recover; that on hearing of Rachel's departure, he had sunk into a kind of torpor, from which it was difficult to rouse him, and that the only hope of his getting better was in his having his daughter with him. All this Mrs. Shenkin had heard before from the doctor, and she turned a deaf ear to William's bold communications, for she was determined that, as long as her child continued ill, she would not allow Rachel to leave the house. William wisely thought that any remonstrance from him would but irritate Mrs. Shenkin without being of use to Rachel, and therefore took his leave.

Rachel could obtain no repose during the first nine or ten days of the child's illness. It was evident that if she left the room but for a moment, he was restless and unhappy. He would lisp her name, and moan till she returned to him. "Achel" was his constant cry, and she alone, by her low and sweet voice, could lull him into anything that resembled sleep. She nursed him—she talked to him—she sung to him—she prevailed on him to take the necessary medicines: in short, what no one else could do, she did; and the little sufferer seemed grateful for her care. He loved her entirely. He would hold up his mouth to kiss her — attempt to smile at her — stroke her cheek with his thin hand, nestle his head upon her bosom, and show her all those marks of childish affection that are generally lavished upon a mother. It must

have been a harder heart than Rachel's that could resist these demonstrations of tenderness; indeed, few could be so callous as to look unmoved upon a suffering child, or refuse a return to his love.

At the crisis of the disease little Tommy was fearfully disfigured, and rendered temporarily blind. The doctor had little hope of his recovery; and Mrs. Shenkin, in her agony, told Rachel that she would give her all and every thing she possessed, if she would save her child. Rachel calmly said, that life and death were in the hands of a merciful God, and that to Him she must appeal to grant her child's life, not to a weak, sinful mortal.

"What I can do," she said, "I will do, and with the Divine blessing he may yet recover; but if it please the Almighty to take him, he will be far happier in heaven than he could ever be here, where he must be subject to sickness and sorrow."

It was a hard task to watch the poor blind child. He was so fretful, and it was so difficult to keep his hands from tearing and irritating his face, and so painful to witness his severe sufferings; but Rachel submitted to it all, and was happily preserved from infection. The naturally good constitution of the child maintained a successful struggle against the disease, and finally overcame it. Their first hope of his recovery arose from his opening his eyes, after several days of perfect blindness. His mother was sitting disconsolately by his side, watching him as he slept, whilst Rachel was lying on the bed, endeavouring to obtain a few moments' repose; a

blessing which seldom visited her, for the unhappy rarely get good wholesome sleep, and she thought too constantly of her father to close her eyes, even when she could snatch a few minutes from her hours of watching. The voice of the child murmuring "Achel" now aroused her, and she started up and leant over him.

"Thank God," she exclaimed, "he sees! his eyes are open."

The mother arose, and in her joy ran off to tell her husband the happy news. Up came the little man, crying and laughing by turns; and not knowing how better to express his delight, he threw his arms about Rachel, and told her she had saved "his dear, dear Tommy." When the doctor paid his next visit, he told Mrs. Shenkin that her child was out of danger, and that, under the Almighty, she owed his life to Rachel. Mrs. Shenkin was not quite pleased with the doctor's manner, but she said nothing.

From this time the little boy began gradually to recover, and Rachel continued her care and nursing until he was nearly well, his illness having lasted about a month. One day when he was dressed, and sitting in his chair, lisping all he could say to Rachel, who was alone with him, a vision of her father crossed her mind, and she burst into a flood of tears. The child climbed up upon her lap, put his little arms round her neck, and said, "don't ky, Achel," whilst he began to cry himself. In walked Mrs. Shenkin. Rachel disengaged herself from Tommy, and endeavoured to conceal her tears, but "mammy,

Achel ky," from the child, immediately discovered them. Mrs. Shenkin was making a great inward effort; an effort she had never before made, that of self-conquest. She was trying to swallow certain feelings of pride which were struggling with certain good intentions, and she finally succeeded. She looked out of the window, and addressed Rachel.

"Hem, Rachel —— hem — I think Tommy's *coming*."

"I hope so, ma'am," was Rachel's reply.

"Perhaps I can do with him now," resumed Mrs. Shenkin; "I dare say you'd like to go and see your father."

Rachel sat breathless, whilst Mrs. Shenkin paused, and violently rubbed the table.

"I've no objection," she continued, "to your going home for a time, if you'll promise to come back, supposing Tommy should be worse and want you."

Rachel was quite overcome, and could only sob out her promises and thanks. Mrs. Shenkin, having done as much as her nature would allow her, left the room, and was succeeded by her husband, who, with a joyous countenance, told Rachel to "take his missus whilst she was in the humour, and she should have the grey mare and one of the men directly, if she liked." It was rather late in the day, and Rachel thought the next morning would be the better time, and so it was settled. Mr. Shenkin slipped a couple of pounds into her hand, saying, that he thought she might want her wages just then, and that Mrs. Shenkin had determined to give her that sum, because she

had been so good to Tommy. Many may imagine that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Shenkin were very generous in their reward, but the first year's wages of a farm-servant in Wales are very low, varying from one pound per annum to two or three, and frequently the bare board and lodging are considered as equivalents for the first year of initiation into household drudgery.

Rachel was well satisfied, as she had imagined that no wages would have been given her at all, no positive agreement having been entered into. Sally, who had kept aloof from Rachel during Tommy's illness, for fear she should lose her beauty, now ventured to approach her.

"Go you at once," she said. "Mistress will be sorry for giving you leave by to-morrow, when she has had a night upon it, take my word for it; but bless my heart, how ill you look, girl! Go you to bed directly, and I'll put up your things the while, that you may be off early to-morrow morning. Sure enough a night's rest will do you good, before you go to kill yourself outright by nursing your father."

Rachel took Sally's advice. A long, quiet night did much towards reviving her exhausted strength; and when she awoke early the next morning from an unbroken, dreamless sleep, she felt considerably refreshed. Mr. Shenkin had ordered Bill to get old Grey ready, and Sally had prepared Rachel's bundle and breakfast. Mrs. Shenkin appeared kind, and even grateful, in her manner towards her, and shook her hand with some warmth before she departed.

Rachel stole up stairs to kiss little Tommy's pale cheek as he slept, and felt grieved to leave him. He had obtained a hold over her affections during his illness, which, under other circumstances, would have bound her to him as long as he remained weak and ailing, but her father was a prior duty. The kindly feeling evinced by the whole family towards her, amply repaid her for the sacrifice she had made, and she was thankful that she had been able so to soften her mistress's heart, as to secure a friend where she feared she had made her first enemy.

Seated behind Bill she set off for her home; and as he seconded her wishes by making the horse go a quick trot, they were not long in arriving there. She sent Pally's little grandchild into the house before she ventured in herself, to beg Pally, who was with her father, to prepare him for her arrival. Pally shortly afterwards made her appearance, and having first told Rachel that she was rejoiced to see her, though she *did* look like a ghost, said she might proceed to her father, but must expect to see a great alteration in him.

When Rachel entered the house, she was indeed shocked at her father's appearance. He had already risen; for, though very weak, he could not be prevailed upon to remain in bed, but sat up in his old arm chair, supported by pillows. As Rachel advanced towards him he stretched out his hand to greet her, whilst tears sprung into his dim, grey eye. As he clasped his arms round her, he said, "I scarce

thought to see you again, Rachel, but blessed be God, who has spared me till this day."

Rachel looked at him, and great was the change she saw. He was no longer the stout, ruddy, active Jackey Bach, whose caustic jests and ever-ready repartees were so well known and felt; but a thin, pale, white-haired old man, with a sober, and somewhat melancholy, countenance. She had left him very ill, but even in the height of his fever he did not look so different from his former self as he did now. The quick twinkle of his eye was gone — the satirical smile that had played about his mouth was no longer there — his eye had lost its lustre, and his lips their colour and fulness. He still suffered considerable pain. The rheumatism had clung to him, and he was constantly assailed by a short hard cough and difficulty of breathing. Every thing that kindness and affection could do for him, Pally and William, and indeed all the neighbours, had done, but it seemed to have been of little service. The Corporal had forgotten old animosities, and paid him constant visits, until it was found necessary to limit them, Jackey being sometimes irritable, and the Corporal experiencing some difficulty in keeping off the debateable land.

But Jackey had longed for Rachel. When he found that she could not come to him, he spoke of no one else from morning till night — enlarged upon the cruelty of her mistress — the cowardice of "Tommy Shenkin," and even reproached Rachel herself. All

was, however, forgotten when she appeared, and told him that she hoped to be able to remain with him until he was better.

"Better," he said, "I am not likely to be, but I should like to have you to close these old eyes, and to be with me at the last."

Pally told Rachel that her father's "mind had altered very much lately, particularly since the clergyman had visited him." "He is such a good gentleman," she said, "and tells him such comfortable things it does one's heart good to hear him; and Jackey seems to be thinking now all day long, and does nothing but read his Bible, and talk about his end. I thought it was a bad sign when he wouldn't let our minister come again; but he was always a church-goer, Jackey Bach."

Pally was, like most of her equals amongst her country-people, a dissenter, and with well-meant religious zeal would fain have made Jackey Bach, and the few who clung to the church, dissenters too. To aid her endeavours towards effecting this desired end, she contrived to assemble a number of Methodists in Jackey's sick room, for the purpose of holding what is called, in these parts, a prayer-meeting. It was shortly after Rachel left, and when Jackey was too weak and ill either to resist or refuse anything. The intentions of the party who, by Pally's connivance, were gathered together round Jackey's bed, were doubtless excellent, and they would all have done him any good, either spiritual or temporal, that lay in their power; still I fear their judgment was greatly

at fault. I would not be supposed to ridicule any pious office, especially that of prayer, for I know who has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" still I greatly fear the stentorian efforts of half-a-dozen illiterate men, without even their minister to head them, accompanied by the groans of twice as many old women, are not the best possible means of leaving good and happy religious impressions upon the mind of a sick or dying man. In Jackey's case the effect was quite the reverse. He lay exhausted on his bed, with a mind scarcely recovered from the wanderings of delirium, too weak to articulate, and too much overcome by pain to endure with patience the least movement or noise. His well-meaning but injudicious friends, fell upon their knees around him, and shouted by turns for a good two hours, whilst Pally even was too much entranced to think of the probable consequences to the sick man. I do not say that they were not all very earnest in their supplications — I do not say that they might not, some of them at least, have been themselves benefited, and have felt their hearts softened, by the office they had performed,—I only say that in this, as in most similar instances, the effect upon the sufferer was anything but beneficial.

In the first place, to judge from the voices of the speakers, loudness of ejaculation appeared to be a merit, for each outvied the other in vociferation, thus irritating the nerves of the sick man until he felt almost bewildered; and in the second, there seemed

to be a kind of emulation as to whose prayer should be the longest, which not only wore out his attention, but wearied his temper. All present, however, knew that they had done their best, and consequently hoped much.

When they stood round Jackey's bed, after concluding with a hymn, the first inquiry they made was, "whether he was refreshed?"—no answer. The second, "whether he was quite sure of heaven if he died?"—still no answer; the silence occasioning many portentous shakes of the head from the assembly. The third, "whether he would like another prayer-meeting?"—a decided movement indicative of a negative. The fourth and last, "whether he would like to see the minister?"—a shake of the head, and a decided "No." The old women uplifted their hands and groaned aloud; the men whispered, and declared Jackey Bach in a bad way; Pally said, "he might be better next time, and they mustn't despair:" but by the "next time" Jackey was able to protest against their assembling, and they did not meet again.

William spoke, according to Rachel's request, to the kind and good clergyman of the parish, who immediately visited Jackey, and by gentle and judicious conversation led his mind to serious thoughts. He came frequently to see him, and, as Pally said, "spoke such comfortable things to him," that his whole soul seemed given to thoughts of eternity, and, until Rachel returned, no earthly object had appeared to interest him. When William came to

pay his daily visits, his first request was, that he would read to him some passages from the Bible, marked by the good clergyman, and when William was necessarily absent, he perused the Sacred Volume himself.

Rachel thus found her father with an enfeebled body, but with a strengthened and elevated mind. Humbly and heartily did she return thanks to God that it was so, and fervently did she invoke blessings on the head of him who had been an instrument, in the hands of the Almighty, of thus softening her father's heart. With every expression that affectionate and grateful feeling could call forth, Rachel thanked Pally for her attention to her father, and begged her now to return to her long-deserted home, whilst she took upon herself the office of nurse. Happily, Jackey belonged to a club called the "Ivorite's Club," from which he received seven shillings a week, which sum prevented his feeling that clog of poverty so frequently the attendant of sickness amongst the lower classes. He had been always an honest, saving man—owed no one a halfpenny, and was said to have a little sum in the Savings' Bank, destined for Rachel. He bore a high character amongst persons of all ranks for uprightness and sobriety, and he now began to reap the fruits of it, in the consideration shown towards him by every one. He received many little presents from "the House," and visits from its inmates; occasional gifts from the neighbouring farmers, and offers of assistance from all his friends. This was very pleasant

both to Jackey and Rachel, as it always is to know oneself loved and respected.

As time passed on, and Rachel continued day after day to watch her father's health, she thought he became gradually, though almost imperceptibly, weaker. He still sat up; still saw his friends occasionally; still admitted Pally's and William's constant visits; and still talked to Rachel and made her read to him; yet she perceived a continual change. His voice grew weaker, his memory failed him, and his bodily strength was gone. Rachel nursed him as tenderly as a fond daughter could nurse a parent, and William was ever on the watch to discover what would give him pleasure and relieve the tedium of his long confinement. Jackey was very patient—for a man of his temperament remarkably so. He had never been ill before—had never been compelled to leave his work a day from indisposition, and many wondered that he was not more irritable; but Rachel and the good clergyman knew that his naturally excitable temper was calming beneath a power that was operating in his heart for his eternal good. He did not say much, indeed he never spoke of his feelings to any one but to the clergyman and Rachel, and to them not frequently; but his whole manner and conduct were those of a person making earnest, though partly concealed preparations, for a journey towards that land where the beloved ones who surround the traveller before his departure, lose sight of him for an uncertain period of time.

Poor Rachel! how many a sob did she smother,

and how many a tear did she wipe away, when she turned aside from looking in her father's face, and thought how soon she might see it no more! How difficult did she find it to read with steady voice the beautiful prayers in the Office for the Sick which he so frequently made her read to him—and how impossible to sing the psalms and hymns that he would sometimes bid her sing! Oh! no one can tell, but those who have performed similar painful duties, how she felt or what she suffered—how the swelling of her throat choked her utterance when she was about to supplicate her God to take her father to himself if it were His blessed will that he should die; or how the big tears rolled down her cheeks when she saw his eyes turned upwards, and heard his voice joining in prayers for pardon and peace; or how her heart beat when her own name mingled with his supplications, and she knew that he was imploring blessings upon his child.

Jackey sometimes spoke to William and Rachel of the past and present, and occasionally of the future. He lamented his own obstinacy and perverseness in sending Rachel from him, and said that he had never been happy since; that he had lost all interest in things which had, when she was with him, given him the greatest pleasure, and that his illness was a just punishment for subjecting her to so much undeserved hardship and privation. He expressed himself at peace with all the world, even with Nanny the Corporal and Mrs. Shenkin—said that nothing made him feel so happy as the prospect that William

and Rachel might some day be united, though it would not be permitted to him to witness their union; and that he should die without a care for his child, since he saw her future happiness in perspective. He begged Rachel not to mourn too heavily for him; he could not wish her not to mourn at all, for he could not desire to pass away unlamented by the daughter he loved so well; he, like every other human being, hoping there might be some to lament his loss when the grave had closed over him.

Jackey was sitting one calm summer evening, with William and Rachel by his side, and the Bible open, as usual, upon a little table before him. He looked as if he were not long for this world, his cheeks were so thin and pale, and his eyes so hollow. Rachel, too, appeared nearly exhausted by long watching. The healthy colour she had gained at Grongar was gone, and her cheek was white as the lily. She was so fearfully thin that William, as he looked anxiously at her, feared that if she continued much longer to nurse her poor father, she would not survive him many months. Perfect stillness reigned in the little chamber, whilst a soft light from the setting sun rested upon its inmates. The door opened, and the Corporal entered. He had not seen Jackey for some days, and seemed forcibly struck with the change in his appearance. He stalked up to him, and as his tall gaunt figure approached the table, he made a strange contrast to the emaciated and dying man whom he came to visit. He stretched out his long

arm towards Jackey, and grasped the hand that was feebly extended towards him in return.

"Jackey, my old friend," he said, with an agitated voice, "I have very often said hard and wrong things to you, and picked quarrels with you for nothing but for the sake of disputing. I am sorry for it from the bottom of my heart, and I am come to ask your pardon."

The tears stood in the Corporal's eyes as he spoke, and he seemed much affected. Jackey looked at him and smiled, whilst a beam of light darted, for a moment, across his dim eye.

"We have both been wrong, and I was worse than you," he said. "It is very wicked to spend the few days God gives us here in quarrelling and disputing, and may He forgive us, as we forgive one another."

It was an affecting sight to see those two old men, with their hands tightly clasped, exchange heart-forgiveness, and remain looking at each other in silence. Jackey, with a feeble voice, spoke first. Pointing to Rachel, he said, "You will be kind to her, William?"

"As if she were my own daughter," replied the Corporal solemnly.

Jackey looked grateful and was about to speak, when a gentle tap at the door announced the welcome visit of the clergyman. The Corporal moved to go, but Jackey begged him to remain. "It will do us both good to hear the blessed Word, and to pray together," he said. The Corporal sat down again, and every one present listened with breathless attention

whilst the pastor read and commented on some of the most beautiful and comforting passages of Holy Writ.

This ended, they all kneel down. Slowly and solemnly he reads the Office for the Sick; Rachel kneels by her father's side; she feels his hand pressed upon her head. His voice sounds from time to time as it joins in the prayers: his "Amen" is united to that of his friends. The prayers continue—his soul is fervently recommended to the mercy of the Most High; imperceptibly his voice ceases—his response is no longer heard. The prayers are finished: each offers up a silent petition, and they rise from their knees. Rachel has already risen and is gazing on her father; all look at him in whose behalf they have been supplicating—his eyes are turned upwards as if in continued prayer—they pause—he does not speak or move—a scream from Rachel announces that all is over—Jackey Bach is dead!

No. XIV.

THE IVORITE'S FUNERAL.

CAN these be preparations for a funeral? Can this motley assemblage of people, dressed in all colours but black, — this throng around what was lately Jackey Bach's cottage — be about to attend him to his last home? A week has elapsed since he died, and his spirit is now far away from the turmoils of this troublous world, but the home that still contains his mortal remains is a scene of bustle and confusion. Funerals in Wales, like weddings, are public gatherings, and this is one in every sense of the word. The deceased was an Ivorite, and the members of the club are expected to follow their departed brother to the grave. He had belonged to this club from his youth: to it he owed his comforts in sickness, and the expenses of his funeral are to be defrayed by it.*

Rachel has left the arrangements to her uncle and Pally, and has retired to her little up-stairs room to weep alone. The sun is shining brightly through the curtain that shades the window, and she feels how sadly his glorious rays strike upon the spirit when

* The Ivorites are a body of men united to keep up the ancient language and customs of Wales, as well as to assist one another in times of emergency.

sorrow has oppressed it. The most gladsome thing in creation seems now the most melancholy, and willingly would she exchange the warm beams that give life and energy to half the world, for dark heavy clouds more in accordance with her present feelings. The sounds of voices and footsteps too strike heavily upon her ear, and worse, far worse, distant laughter will make itself heard, as the would-be mourners throng down the lane towards the place of meeting. It is not that the face of any one of Jackey's old friends wears a smile on this solemn occasion — they are all decently grave; but there are many present who were never personally interested in the deceased, and who make their appearance merely to see the funeral and hear the sermon. It is from these that the half-suppressed voice of merriment proceeds, as they talk over the ordinary events of the week; but as they draw near the house, they too become quiet, and if not serious, at least forbear a smile.

The little room in which the coffin is placed is thronged with relatives and friends. The Corporal and William are amongst the sincerest of the mourners: the former is expatiating with sad countenance on the merits of his old friend, whilst the latter sits apart with an abstracted and melancholy air, lamenting the deceased, and thinking of his afflicted daughter. Pally, true to her character, is resolved that nothing shall be omitted that can do honour to Jackey's memory, or keep up old customs. She is accordingly busily engaged in serving out a beverage that was once common at funerals, but is

now comparatively seldom used. It is called abeilon, and is composed of the juice of the elderberry, rosemary, and other herbs, well spiced and poured into hot ale, which is distributed to the mourners, and drunk, notwithstanding the circumstances, with evident satisfaction. All the assembly, William excepted, partake of this reeking drink, eat cake with it, and talk meanwhile of many things far removed from the solemn subject of death, though it would seem impossible to forget it in the presence of a corpse.

When the party had drank a sufficient quantity of abeilon, one of them, a tall lank man, arose. He was dressed in black, and appeared somewhat of a higher rank than the rest of the assembly. Pally, that determined manager, had, together with Jackey's brother, settled that there should be "a preaching," and this was the dissenting minister. It was a fine bright day, towards the end of August, and the stone seat outside the house was considered the best situation for the preacher. He was therefore followed by the party of mourners, Pally and William excepted, into the court, where a crowd of people were expecting him. Pally had taken upon herself the office of watcher, and considered it her duty to remain near the coffin; but when she perceived William not far from the corpse, she thought she might venture to relax a little of her vigilance, and therefore crept towards the door to listen to what was said. She and Nanny the Corporal had sat up the whole of the preceding night with the corpse, in order that the

"watch night," as well as every thing else, should be properly observed.

Elevated on the stone seat, with his back against the wall, stood the preacher, a tall thin man, with a pale, grave face, and straight black hair. Around him was an anxious and attentive audience. The little court was filled to suffocation, and the crowd extended half way up the lane. Such is the prevalence of dissent in Wales, that whilst the churches are neglected, a sermon thus preached attracts multitudes, who say they "like something *new*, and not the same thing over and over again." Eyes, ears, mouths, are all upon the stretch as the minister begins his discourse. After quietly delivering the text, he pours forth at once a flood of words. With a voice sufficiently loud to reach the last of the throng up the lane, and with energetic movements of the arms and head, he proceeds, untiring, on his way. He seems to touch upon every subject within the range of his ideas, though death and its consequences is the primary one. The event which has brought him in contact with his hearers is particularly alluded to, and Jackey's state of mind at the period of his death, little as he was acquainted with it, is not forgotten. An aggravated detail of the effect that the prayer-meeting had produced upon the deceased, had been previously given him, and the inferences he draws from it are not favourable — still he "hopes," though his "hopes" sound like "fears." With true sectarian rigour he lavishes curses upon the unrepentant sinner, in other words, upon all who do not think and feel as he does,

and doles out mercies to the few who do. His words produce groans from the aged and tears from the young; but I fear they are only the groans and tears of momentary excitement, since many of those now seemingly much moved, may, possibly, soon be found drowning all they have heard, in tempting potations offered at yonder ale-house.

I wish not to seem either prejudiced or unchristian, but good as may be the intentions of the preacher, I question whether similar meetings are ever productive of much benefit. In the first place, the minister is not often one of the enlightened members of his fraternity, but frequently an unlearned and self-elected preacher; in the second, the listeners are assembled from curiosity and the pleasures of idleness, and often, as I said before, finish the day in drunkenness and riot. Be this as it may, however, the sermon on the present occasion is not without its merits, and might serve to impress forcibly upon the mind three things, upon which we cannot think too much or too often — the shortness of life, the certainty of death, and the duration of eternity.

The preacher speaks, and his auditors listen with deep attention, and without apparent fatigue, during upwards of an hour and half. The time appointed for the funeral is approaching, and it is necessary for him to come to a conclusion. He therefore winds up his discourse by an appeal to the consciences of his hearers, and an earnest entreaty to each to take warning by the constant deaths of relatives, friends or neighbours, and to prepare for the awful change

which must sooner or later visit all present. He then gives out a verse of a hymn, in which most of his congregation join, and although the voices are not either cultivated or melodious, their union in the open air is not unpleasing to the ear. The chorus is softened by the breeze, and I trust many of the voices that mingle in it, if not all, may be chanting the real feelings of the heart, and that thus the whole may ascend, as a free-will offering of praise, to the throne of grace, where the outpourings of the soul are ever acceptable.

The scene is a striking one; men and women of all ages are crowded together, some holding children by the hand, others hushing their infants to sleep in their arms. Here, two or three old women look at one another, shake their heads, and utter an inward groan; there, as many young ones appear more bent on the things of this world, and gaze about them at the dresses of their neighbours. On either side the preacher are a number of aged men, some leaning against the wall for support, others standing by chairs they have occupied during the sermon, and others supporting themselves by sticks or crutches. Two or three of them here and there are eagerly wiping their spectacles, to enable them to read the hymn from a book which they divide between them, and which, I fear, the one who is fortunate enough to be in the middle, alone succeeds in accomplishing. The low stone wall is crowded by children, some seated, whilst their parents stand beside them, and support their little heads on their

shoulders as they sleep from very weariness; and others mischievously keeping one another awake by tricks that alone could enter the imagination of a child, and that call forth an occasional cross look and angry nod from the elders. Upon the stone seat or pulpit, and on either side of the preacher's legs, two more of these urchins have found a resting-place, and heedless of an occasional push or kick from their minister, given in the excitement of delivering some impressive sentence, incline their little heads upon their bosoms, and dream of cakes and play. Pally stands in the doorway, glancing alternately at the preacher without, and the coffin within—her thoughts divided between the living and the dead. The Corporal's gaunt figure is prominently placed opposite the preacher, and towers above all who surround it. He stands bolt upright, and holds a hymn-book up to his face, whilst he sings, apparently, with all his heart.

The hymn being finished, the minister descends from his pulpit, and again enters the house. He is immediately attended by Rachel's uncle and Pally, the former of whom slips five shillings into his hand in payment for his sermon, whilst the latter offers a second glass of abeilon. Both are received with thanks, together with many complimentary speeches upon the sermon he has just delivered, and the preacher takes his departure. He is greeted in the court by as many as can manage to approach him, and again receives reiterated thanks for his sermon, and commendations upon its "searching" character.

The preparations for bearing the body to its last resting-place now began. Poor Rachel made her appearance, accompanied by Pally, and took her station beside the coffin. The Corporal, and five other old friends of Jackey's, were to be the bearers, and they now carried the remains into the court. They were followed by Rachel, her face buried in a white handkerchief, and Pally, who was obliged to support her. Next came Rachel's uncle and William; then a relative of the deceased and Mr. Shenkin. Most of those persons whom I have had occasion to mention in these sketches joined the funeral in the court. There was Nat Lewis, with a black hat-band tied with white love-ribbon, like the mourners; Nanny the corporal and her daughter, dressed in all the black they could procure; Pally's little granddaughter; one or two of the servants from the House, and at the end of the procession, Mad Moll, who had twisted a piece of old black ribbon round her bonnet, and thrown a black apron across her shoulders. Upwards of fifty people followed, but few were dressed in black. The red cloaks and scarlet and black skirts looked strangely unfunereal, though the mixed colours, contrasting with the black of the chief mourners, had a singularly striking effect. At the turning of the lane another procession was seen approaching in an opposite direction. It was composed of the members of the Ivorite Club, consisting of between two and three hundred persons, who joined the funeral, and preceded the coffin. Each individual wore a black scarf and hat-band, and the general effect was very imposing. They

wound their mournful way through the park, until they reached the little church I have already attempted to describe. There they were met by the clergyman, and the solemn service began.

The coffin rests in the aisle, and the church is filled with the mourners. The first part of the service over, they proceed to the churchyard, and surround the grave. Attention — deep, mute attention — is visible on every face, and a tear glistens in many an eye. The bright green fields — the merry notes of the birds — the radiancy of nature — and, above all, the glorious brilliancy of the sun, seem to mock the solemnity of the scene. The sunbeams fall upon the dark forms of the mourners, and rest upon the coffin. They would seem to look sadly upon Rachel, as leaning over the grave she watches her father's body descend slowly to the earth from whence it came. Oh! awful, heart-rending moment! She feels that now all is indeed over, and that she has looked her last upon her best and dearest earthly friend. At the words "dust to dust" her whole frame trembles with agitation, and Pally is obliged to support her. She listens to the beautiful and hopeful words that follow the lowering of the coffin, and they sink gently into her heart, and calm, in some degree, the excess of her grief. The tears roll down her pale face as she gazes until the last words of the burial-service are uttered, and silence for a moment succeeds. A few lumps of earth fall heavily upon the coffin, and are echoed upon her ear. Her friends gently endeavour to withdraw her from the grave,

and after another long last look, and a supplicating glance heavenward, she resigns herself to their guidance.

The Ivorites now surround the grave. Hand in hand they encircle it, whilst each takes from his bosom a sprig of rosemary, and drops it upon the coffin. This last act completed, they stand for a few moments, solemnly silent, then disunite and form into pairs. Once more Rachel advances, and looks into the grave. The sweet smell of the rosemary seems to remind her of the ascension of the soul to that happy region where she trusts her father dwells. She turns more calmly away, and the melancholy procession forms again.

How many hearts were beating with sympathy for the poor girl, and how many kind wishes were inwardly breathed for her. The Ivorites, and most of her other friends, left her at the door of the little cottage, now no longer to be considered her home. She entered, followed by Pally, her uncle, and Mr. Shenkin. Their words of condolence, kindly as they are meant, fell sadly upon her ear. She knew, however, that she must no longer indulge her grief, and she endeavoured to suppress her feelings, and to speak to her friends of her future prospects. She told Mr. Shenkin that she meant to return to Grongar immediately, but begged to be permitted to remain yet a day or two longer at the cottage, to make arrangements for the distribution of its furniture, now her little property. Mr. Shenkin assured her of his wife's permission to stay as long as she chose,

adding, that they should be glad to see her whenever she came, and the sooner the better, since nothing went on well without her. She fixed the following Monday for her return, and with many assurances of friendship, Mr. Shenkin took his departure.

The next day, which was Saturday, they removed the furniture from the cottage, and melancholy work it was. Pally and William were the chief agents, and Rachel assisted with a heavy heart. Pally gave house-room to as much of the furniture as her little dwelling would contain, and the rest was distributed amongst the neighbours, who could not forbear insinuating, despite the occasion, that they should not want to keep it long. Even her uncle, as he made a list of the separate articles, declared Rachel would have as good a "staffell" as any girl in the country, if she chose to get married. William begged to be allowed to take charge of the bullfinch and rose-tree, and his request was readily granted, whilst the cat and poultry were committed to Pally's care, together with the few books and the pictures that had ornamented the walls of the room, the latter consisting principally of a series of elaborately finished paintings descriptive of the history of the Prodigal Son.

The room was soon cleared, and every one knows how desolate an empty apartment always looks. Rachel stood silently gazing around her as William bore the last piece of furniture to the place destined for its reception, and left her a little while alone. The bare walls looked dreary and comfortless — the white patches where the pictures and bookshelf had been

was the only variety they afforded — the grate was empty, and not an object remained to cheer the sight. The room in which her childhood and girlhood had passed — where all her simple pleasures had flowed in upon her — where she had known the happiness of a father's love — was now desolate as the grave. She leant her back against the wall, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed aloud. Every stone of that lowly room seemed to possess an interest for her, and to bring to her recollection some incident of her past life. It was now no longer her home — no tie bound her to it — yet she would rather have been left alone within its walls, than have been transported to palaces of luxury and grandeur, had such been within her province or reach.

There are feelings of grief that lie deep, deep in the heart, and that are far beyond the search of human scrutiny. They have no vent in words, therefore words cannot paint them. They are confined to no rank of life, but exist as painfully in the breast of the cottager as of the prince. Happily for the former, the necessary cares and business of life draw him, so to say, out of himself, and his sorrow is, as it were, torn from him, by duties that he is obliged to perform; but when cessation from those duties allows him a few moments' leisure and thought, memory awakes again, and a train of associations arises in his mind, not the less acute from having been awhile forced into subjection.

Rachel was aroused from her grief by feeling something brush several times against her. She

order to arrive in good time at Grongar. Pally said she would "send her," * and William, who came in, begged to be allowed to "send her also," and so they proceeded together. They were a melancholy little party. Rachel thought of the day when she first left home, and of her father's anxiety for her good conduct. She thought of the changes that had taken place since then, and of all that had happened to herself. Few words were spoken, but all three felt much. After walking a few miles they were met by Bill and the grey mare, sent by thoughtful Mr. Shenkin for the assistance of Rachel. She felt very grateful for the kindness that prompted this, and when she looked at the broad pleased grin of Bill as he greeted her, she knew there were warm hearts, even at Grongar. When the last "good bye" was said, and the hands were shaken for the last time, and when Pally had declared that she had fifty things to say to Rachel that she had never found time to say, Rachel mounted the grey mare, and with a sinking spirit journeyed on, whilst Pally and William watched her until she was out of sight, and then returned home.

* "To send a person," in Wales, means to go a little way with him; or, as they say in some parts of England, "to bring him going;" or, as the Bible and Shakspeare have it, "to bring him on his way."

No. XV.

THE STAFFELL.

WHEN Rachel returned to Grongar, it was the busy time of harvest. Every one was employed, and every one was merry. She was welcomed most kindly by Mr. and Mrs. Shenkin, and Sally's joy knew no bounds. All who were at work about the farm rejoiced to see the sweet face of the gentle-tempered Rachel, and to hear her kind words once more; for although it was soon discovered by many a rustic Llangathen beau that she had a heart for no one there at least, there were several upon whom her smile and her goodness had made impression. It is hard to say how many smart youths were seen taking their Sunday-evening walk up Grongar Hill, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the one they delighted to look upon; but certain it is, that none of them obtained even a glance of encouragement from her eyes. As to Tom and Bill they only sighed in secret, and disputed the pleasure of carrying all her pails of water, or doing her any little kindly office.

Now that she was returned, and returned in affliction, the attention of every one was redoubled. She was one of those who seemed to claim sympathy and to obtain it, as much from the unobtrusive character

of her grief as from the causes that gave rise to it. She set about her work as industriously as ever — she exerted herself to please Mrs. Shenkin, now more willing to be pleased than she formerly had been — and was always ready to play with her little friend Tommy, whose affection would have been troublesome to one less gentle than she was. But in spite of her activity, constant occupation, and ever ready kindness, it was plain that she was not happy. The smile that used to brighten up her countenance like the sunbeam might now be more properly compared to the moonbeam, for it was soft but sad. All Sally's drolleries, and they were not unfrequently full of native humour — all her good stories about "master and mistress" — and all her raillery, could not elicit a laugh, for Rachel never laughed now. The merry sallies of the reapers, and the mirth of harvest-home, either fell unheeded upon her ear or recalled old times to her memory, when she bound the sheaves by her father's side, or gleaned whilst he made them into stacks. Her cheeks frequently bore the traces of tears, and it was evident that the impression made upon her mind by her father's death, did not wear away. She still found her greatest happiness in ascending Grongar Hill, where she could feel quite alone, and meditate on the past.

A sensible change had been wrought at the farm. Mr. Shenkin, since his first success on the day of the election, began to have a will of his own, and to take the reins of domestic government occasionally into his own hands. It is true that, like the joint

kings of Lacedæmon, the two ruling powers frequently came into collision, and disputes and altercations arose which seemed to threaten the subjection of one or the other. Still Mr. Shenkin, to Sally's indescribable satisfaction, was as often victorious as his wife, who found it expedient now and then to succumb, and who was evidently astonished into unwilling submission. The change in Mr. Shenkin was really something astonishing. Not his own, or his wife's, fine-strutting bantam-cock, ever walked more erect or looked more majestical than he did, when pleased with himself and every one about him, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and felt that he was his own master. Fifty times a day did he congratulate himself, with an inward chuckle, upon his emancipation from female tyranny, and bless the election, Mr. James Llandewy, and his other friends, as the primary cause thereof. It is true, that the husband and wife seldom agreed upon any point, but they now disputed what before Mr. Shenkin would have uncompromisingly yielded.

But to do Mrs. Shenkin justice, she was somewhat improved in many ways. Rachel's meekness and submission had not been without its effect upon her, hard-natured as she certainly was. They had appeared to her as something beautiful and pure, and if she did not wish to imitate them, she was not insensible to their superiority over her own violence and ill-temper. She had a misgiving at her heart, and certain qualms of conscience respecting Jackey's death also, and when she looked upon Rachel's sad

countenance, she remembered that she had been the cause of hurrying her away from her father's sick-bed, when the attendance and care of his child were the only things likely to conduce to his recovery. This recollection weighed rather heavily upon her mind, and caused her to treat Rachel with consideration and kindness.

As time wore on, Rachel became more cheerful. One fine autumn Sunday brought a brighter hue to her cheek by bringing William to Grongar. He came, discreetly enough, from Pally to inquire after Rachel's health; but Mrs. Shenkin shrewdly suspected that old Pally's handsome messenger was not without some personal interest in the eyes of Rachel. All Sally's curiosity, and it was as great as that of any one of mother Eve's daughters, was excited by William's appearance. She watched and wondered, and wondered and watched, until she came to the conclusion, that *she* was not the only person in the world who was clever in keeping a secret, when certain private ends were to be gained thereby. She accused Rachel of being "very sly indeed, and a pretty one to preach to her about story-telling, when she had denied having a sweetheart fifty times, and now it was proved that she had one."

Sally would not have gained much information had she heard the whole of the conversation that passed between William and Rachel during their short interview. It turned wholly upon Jackey, and Rachel felt almost happy in being able once more to talk freely upon the subject nearest her

heart, to one who could enter into her feelings. William left her without venturing to broach another topic upon which his whole desires were fixed, but which he knew would be displeasing to her at present. All Sally's manœuvres could not obtain from Rachel the confession she desired, and she declared, somewhat pettishly, that Rachel was "the closest and queerest girl in the world."

As months passed by, however, and brought frequent visits from William, every one began to suspect that Rachel and he were "keeping company." But it was long before William could prevail upon Rachel to listen to his suit as a lover, and to give him the power of openly declaring himself such. How could she think of happiness so soon after her father's death? how dream of marriage with a heart burdened with sorrow? In vain William urged that it was her father's dying wish for him to become her husband, and that his greatest desire was to share and alleviate her grief till time should heal it—she would not consent to anything he proposed.

Upwards of six months passed, and the twelvemonth of Rachel's hard apprenticeship to Mrs. Shenkin had expired, before William could obtain a hearing. At the end of this period it was necessary for Rachel to make arrangements for the future. Mrs. Shenkin told her that she might stay in her service for as long or as short a period as she liked, and said she hoped she did not intend to leave her. William urged her not to engage herself again, but Rachel had formed

her resolution, and no remonstrances or entreaties could induce her to abandon it. She would remain another year with Mrs. Shenkin, after which she hoped she should feel cheerful enough to become William's wife, without showing disrespect to the memory of her father. She should then, she said, be accustomed to every household duty, and be strong enough, she hoped, for such as might devolve upon her when she had a home of her own. William's prospects too, she urged, were uncertain, and a twelvemonth might see him settled in some regular employment. In short, Rachel, like most of her sex, proved the prudent party, and matters were settled according to her wish.

Mr. and Mrs. Shenkin were duly informed by William of his engagement with Rachel, and were requested by him to give him their permission to visit her occasionally. Mrs. Shenkin forgot, in Rachel's favour, her utter aversion to all domestic affairs of the kind, and granted his request, saying that she hoped he would prove as good a husband as Rachel deserved. When this conversation took place, Mr. Shenkin rubbed his hands, and shuffled about the room, performing sundry evolutions in the way of patting William on the back, shaking him by the hand, calling him a lucky fellow, &c., until he finally shuffled himself out of the room in search of Rachel. He found her in the dairy attempting to skim the milk, but succeeding very ill.

"Why Rachel," began the little man, "see what you are about, girl! the milk and cream are going

into the pail together; and just look! you have spilt half of it over the floor."

"Dear me! so I have, sir," said Rachel, blushing deeply.

"No wonder, Rachel—no wonder," jocosely proceeded Mr. Shenkin; "there are certain unlucky days in the year, and this is one of them with you, I suppose — every thing goes wrong, don't it? You left the cake you were buttering to burn upon the fire just awhile, for nothing but to come and spill the milk; but there's an excuse, to be sure: a very nice good sort of a young man, Rachel, I'm sure — and you'll stay with us another year yet; I'm glad of it, and I wish you happy with all my heart."

Here Mr. Shenkin uttered something between a cry and a laugh, and assured Rachel that he loved her just as well as if she was his own daughter, and hoped to dance at her wedding. Mr. Shenkin's kindness brought to Rachel's mind her own dear father, and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"There, go you now," he said, "and settle matters: Sally will skim the milk better than you to-night I think, so we'll send her here."

Sally appeared most opportunely, and if we might judge from the cunning smile of her eye, and her side glance at Rachel, she had not been far from the dairy during the late conversation. Mr. Shenkin disappeared, and Sally took up the thread of the discussion.

"Ay, go you and *settle matters*, Rachel. A tall, smart, handsome sweetheart! no wonder that nobody

at Llangathen would do! I'll stay out another twelvemonth if 'tis only to be at the bidding and see to the staffell. What fun it will be, to be sure."

Sally continued to soliloquise, after Rachel had left the room, upon the pleasures in store for her, and before she had half skimmed the milk, had purchased all Rachel's wardrobe, and arranged every necessary preliminary for her marriage.

In the mean time Rachel went finally to *settle matters* with William, and it was remarked that when she returned from a walk up the hill, she looked more blooming and happy than she had done since her father's death.

Time crept on, and time is a sure, though slow, physician to the mind. Grief, happily for us poor mortals, will wear itself out, and Rachel gradually recovered her health and spirits. She felt herself surrounded by many blessings, with, she hoped, others in store for her; and she began to think it wrong to cherish sorrow for a loss which she could not repair, and she endeavoured to reason herself into cheerfulness. As may be imagined Sally was not backward in inquiring into Rachel's secrets, and in making her remarks upon such as she could elicit. Her great care, however, was the staffell.

A staffell, be it known, is the *trousseau* of the lower classes in Wales, but it embraces a greater number of articles than that fashionable appendage to a lady's bridal. The generosity and attachment of the man does not, generally speaking, make him unmindful of his household comforts, which he expects

his intended wife to provide for him, before he takes her "for better for worse." Your accomplished and elegant lover looks for his ten or twenty thousand pounds as an indemnification for the disagreeables he imposes upon himself in matrimony, whilst your Welsh rustic swain expects bed and bedding, chairs and tables, cups and saucers, and the like, to repay him for the difficulties he entails upon himself. The earliest and most earnest desire of a Welshwoman is, therefore, to procure a good staffell.

We will take Sally as an instance of this. She entered service when she was about sixteen — she is now nearly thirty. What did she purchase with the first five shillings she received? Two cups with red and yellow birds upon them, a jug, a pictured plate, and a tea-cup and saucer. It is true that she sadly wanted a new gown, and that she was obliged to go without stockings, Sundays excepted — but what of that? Two cups, a jug, a plate, and a cup and saucer, were the beginning of a staffell, and she knew she should never get a husband unless she got a staffell. She has been continually adding to these first articles of earthenware up to the present time. Not a fair or market has Sally visited, not a wareman has she seen, without increasing her store. Upon a certain shelf in her mother's house, and under lock and key in her bed-room at Mrs. Shenkin's, may be seen some twenty or thirty jugs of all forms, and ornamented with every species of device. Large jugs and small jugs — tall jugs and short jugs — some painted over with flowers, trees, birds,

and houses, and others with men, horses, and hounds. She has teacups and saucers without end; plates with little similarity of form or size; drinking-cups in equal profusion; one or two choice glasses; several little china sheep and lambs, with trees growing out of their tails, and not, like the one which sheltered Baron Munchausen, proceeding from the back of the animals; spoons that try to persuade you they are silver; a deep blue thick glass teapot with a cover given to the same kind of deceit as the spoons, with a cream-jug and sugar-basin to match;—all these she has, and much more, which has absorbed her income, or a considerable part of it, from the age of sixteen to thirty. I must be understood to cast no aspersions on her Sunday attire, which is always smart enough, and her boxes are quite as much swelled with *best clothes*, as her mother's shelves with crockery-ware; but honesty obliges me to confess that her every-day garb is not the most attractive.

Wonder not, oh ye damsels! at Sally's early efforts at staffell-making. I know a respectable old maid—and she was one of Pally's All-Hallow Eve party—who has been *keeping company* with a smart widower for the last twenty years, and whose banns have actually been published half a dozen times, yet whose *devoted* lover will not marry her, because her staffell has not yet attained the size and substance he thinks necessary for domestic comfort. Now Sally was wise, and determined early in life that it should not be her fault if she did not get a husband, and her

resolution is supposed to be working itself out, for either herself or her cups and saucers, or both, have attracted an admirer, who, like the widower, awaits but the addition of some more important articles of furniture to crown Sally's long-cherished hopes. This was no less a person than our friend Bill, who finding that Rachel was too good for him, took compassion upon Sally, whose fun and readiness to get him and every one else out of a scrape, had made some impression on his heart, when Rachel's appearance at Grongar turned both his head and heart at the same time.

Next to her own, Rachel's staffell was ever uppermost in Sally's mind. She knew that Rachel was a village heiress, and was determined that no efforts on her part should be wanting, to make her procure an outfit suited to her character as such. Every traveller that came to the door was hailed with delight by Sally, and Rachel was at once brought forward to purchase either flannels, laces, shawls, or "crockery-ware." One day when she was occupied at her numerous duties, Sally's voice reached her ear, with a "Rachel! come here, quick! I want to show you something." She answered the summons, and found, standing by the door, two men with baskets of the tempting ware before them, upon which both Mrs. Shenkin and Sally were gazing with longing eyes. Mrs. Shenkin, too, was a strenuous promoter of good staffells, and Rachel was assailed by her as well as Sally, with recommendations to purchase different articles of crockery-ware.

Sally began. "Here Rachel! I'm sure you haven't any smart jugs like this among your old-fashioned things. I'll answer for it that crockery-ware is just the very thing you want. Do now, there's a good girl, buy this plate. I would, in a minute, but I really can't afford it. What's the price of this?"—"A shilling?"—"Nonsense—it ain't worth sixpence. Mistress! look you here! only think of his having the face to ask a shilling for that plate."

Mrs. Shenkin was as much astonished at the wareman's "face" as Sally, and they both commenced a system of cheapening, which finally reduced the plate to half its price. Rachel was, as Sally expressed it, "cross enough" to refuse to purchase it, so Sally, not finding it in her heart to return so beautiful a plate to the basket, drew out sixpence and added it to her store. Now, although I contend that Rachel is superior to the generality of girls in her station of life both in mind and manners, yet she is not entirely free from the little weaknesses of her sex. On the present occasion, for instance, her attention is evidently attracted to the basket in which the disputed plate was not, and the contents of which have not yet been displayed. This basket contains a very pretty set of neat white china, with a small blue flower upon it. Teapot. cream-jug, basins, cups, saucers, plates—all the tea-service complete. Rachel recollects that she has, as Sally guessed, a very old-fashioned and indifferent set of "crockery-ware." She blushingly says to one of the men, "Will you please to let me look at that set of china

in the other basket?" Sally's eyes and ears open wide at the sound.

"All the set for five-and-twenty shillings!" cries the man.

Mrs. Shenkin exclaims, and Sally laughs an incredulous laugh. Rachel is evidently tempted, for it is very neat, and she never yet admired any thing that was not neat.

"Now don't go to buy that plain poor-looking set, when there is that beautiful one with red and gold quite as cheap, I dare say," says Sally, eyeing, in her turn, a gaudy teapot, but conscious of her inability to purchase.

Mrs. Shenkin begins to bargain for the blue and white.

"'Pon my word, ma'am, I can't say less; it cost me every farthing of the money I assure you," says the vendor of ware.

"Not one farthing more than fifteen shillings will we give!" with an inexorable voice replies Mrs. Shenkin.

"Say a pound, ma'am; 'tis dirt cheap in a pound," pursues the man.

"Come you in, girls; we must be about our work," says Mrs. Shenkin, moving away.

"Well there, rather than carry it any further, we'll say eighteen shillings," again interposes the man.

"Fifteen shillings is the most we'll give," replies Mrs. Shenkin, beckoning the girls to follow her.

"I declare you're very hard upon a poor man,"

mutters the wareman, scratching his head; "still I should like to deal with you—but you know, Sam, it cost us more, and we can't afford to sell for less than we pay;" (Mrs. Shenkin is inside the house) "but I see the young 'ooman has set her heart upon it, so you may have it if you will, but 'tis too bad to beat a man down so."

Rachel goes to fetch her fifteen shillings, and to Sally's extreme mortification the red and gold ascends with the basket to the top of the wareman's head, upon which she gazes with as fond a gaze as a nature-loving traveller bestows upon the sun-lighted summit of a mountain. Carefully do Rachel and Sally take up each separate article of china, and *sound it*, an operation performed by knocking the knuckle against it, to discover whether there is crack or flaw. None such being detected, they carry the treasure into the house, Sally dolefully lamenting the while upon its extreme plainness, and extolling the superior beauty of the rejected red and gold.

During the first six months of her second year at Grongar, Rachel did not give her attention to her staffell with any degree of laudable care. The multiplicity of gowns, petticoats, caps, aprons, handkerchiefs, and hats which usually crowd the drawers and boxes of the betrothed, had not yet entered hers. Another winter and summer passed before she thought it necessary to make any purchases. When autumn began, however, her wardrobe increased by degrees, and occasional articles of the dearly loved earthenware also swelled her stores. Sally, on the contrary,

put heart and soul in the work of staffell-framing, but when her mistress inquired whether she had any prospect of being married, her answer always was, "Dear no, ma'am; I must get somebody to have me first." She was too wise to entrust her secret hopes to any one for fear of disappointment, for she was one of the discerning, and declared that she would never give credit to any man's faith, until he had placed the ring on her finger, and audibly answered "Yes."

She sometimes endeavoured to torment Rachel, by begging her "not to make too sure, for who could tell what William might be doing at home there all day long; men were so deceitful, and so changeable, as she knew to her cost!" Any one who looked at Sally's untidy figure, cased in a very coarse pinafore, which served for gown, apron, and neckerchief, need not be particularly astonished at the wavering dispositions of her lovers; but Rachel felt in too happy a state of security to be alarmed by her friend's attacks upon her peace. William was as steady as the pole-star, and all his family were well pleased at the prospect of his marrying Rachel, particularly the Corporal, who declared that he should now be able to fulfil his last promise to poor Jackey Bach, by making Rachel really his daughter.

William's prospects were quite brilliant. He had obtained the situation of carpenter at the House, which insured him regular wages, and gave him the power of employing his evenings, after six o'clock, to his own advantage. His master had promised him

a new cottage, which was nearly completed under his own auspices, but of which he only spoke to Rachel in general terms, wishing its shape, size and situation to be a pleasant surprise to her, when he had the happiness of making her its mistress. Pally entered into his schemes with all the alacrity of youth; and as Rachel's furniture was under her especial charge, they anticipated making their arrangements with the utmost ease.

Never did man work day and night with such untiring vigour as William, and never was master better satisfied with a workman than his with the progress of the house. Pally gave a good six months' polishing and rubbing to the old chairs and tables, which, in consequence, shone like so many looking-glasses. The work of both went merrily on, William whistling and singing in his glee, as every fresh portion of it was achieved, and Pally, if not exactly whistling and singing, inwardly rejoicing at the prospect that her own dear Rachel would soon be again within her reach. If Rachel could realise the truth that she was thus fondly loved, she must have been happy, since there is happiness in the simple feeling of being loved, whether by young or old.

No. XVI.

THE BIDDING.

THE time at last drew near when William was to prove, to Sally's satisfaction, that he meant to marry Rachel, by "putting the ring on her finger, and saying yes." Sally had made Rachel her confidante, and had told her that if she could keep Bill in the humour she meant to marry on the same day that she did, and thus make a double wedding. Mrs. Shenkin had promised Rachel a treat for herself and friends, and Sally hoped that her mistress would do as much for her.

"You know my staffell is ready, Rachel," she said, "and we shall have a bidding. *You* are too smart and proud for a bidding, but *we poor folks* shall be very glad of what our friends will give us to set us up in life."

Rachel prudently suggested that she thought they had better defer their marriage until their prospects were more brilliant, since Bill was poor and Sally was poorer.

"Trust to me for that," cried Sally. "Take a man whilst he's in the mind is my notion, or else, perhaps, he wo'n't take you at all. I know more of these matters than you do. But you must tell mis-

tress, and try to get her in the mind, for I would give the world to be married the same day as you."

Rachel promised to do her best, and succeeded, after much reasoning and disputation, in prevailing upon Mrs. Shenkin to allow the two weddings to be on the same day, and both celebrated at the farm.

Sally was to have a bidding: and for the benefit of such of my readers as have never either seen or heard of a Welsh bidding, I must premise that it is a gathering together of as many of the friends and friends' friends, acquaintances and acquaintances' acquaintances of the bride and bridegroom, as a number of bidding letters can assemble. Each of these individuals is expected to contribute either a gift or loan of money towards the establishment of the young couple. If a loan, that loan is to be repaid when the lender, or any friend or relation to whom he may transfer it, proposes to enter the holy state. Thus the wedded pair set up in life upon the gifts and loans of their friends, and are liable to be called upon for repayment when they may be totally unprovided with money.

Sally showed her usual cunning and good policy in making Rachel's wedding-day hers, for she knew that the additional persons collected together, would add greatly to her wealth. Her bidding-letter, too, was most attractive — another effort of her genius. She had heard that somewhere over amongst the mountains, there lived a famous scholar. He was a schoolmaster and a poet, and had acquired a great reputation for the composition of bidding-letters,

which, however incomprehensible, were much admired for their elegance and eloquence, and produced an electrical effect on the minds of their readers.

To this mountain spirit Sally despatched Bill one cold morning in the beginning of November. It was a long ten or twelve miles' walk there, but the success of his mission amply repaid him for his trouble. It is true, that he found much difficulty in persuading himself to approach the awful poet, for one singular effect of his poetic fire was, that it made every one afraid of him. When Bill had summoned up sufficient resolution, he knocked at the door of a small cottage, that was pointed out to him as the residence of the dreadful man, and was greeted by a stern "Come in;" at least stern seemed the words to his wide-stretched and terrified ears. He awaited another summons before he ventured to unclose the door; and when he entered, he trembled as he felt himself in the presence of "the poet of whom every body was afraid." When Bill looked up, he saw a very high desk, for he did not venture to raise his eyes as high as he *could* raise them, therefore did not at first perceive the figure behind it. Round this desk were seated some ten or twelve boys of various ages, who either were, or ought to have been, learning their lessons. Most of them had the universal *Raddymadasy* in their hands, and such as did not possess a complete copy of that valuable work, had at least a leaf or two to con over. The learned peasant, be it understood, has simplified our "Reading

made Easy" into *Raddymadasy*, probably to facilitate the pronunciation for the youthful mouth.

When Bill had "made his leg," and hemmed and hawed a little, a pair of large spectacles were visible above the desk, and, by degrees, a loose would-be-white cravat, giving symptoms of snuff, followed, which was succeeded by a pepper-and-salt coloured coat, of very ancient date. On the top of the desk stood a suspicious-looking little tin box, and a cup, the contents of which Bill supposed to be something poetic, whilst scattered over it were various papers and pens, leaves of the *Raddymadasy*, and one or two books. Bill having, at last, succeeded in making his wishes known, the poet arose and came forward.

He certainly did look all over a scholar, from the large glasses of his spectacles, down to the wooden soles of his untied shoes. He glanced at a very large watch which he drew from his pocket, and finding it nearly half-past eleven o'clock, he told his scholars, with a learned wave of his stick, that as it was "just twelve, they might go home now, but they might play about a little bit first in his garden, just to get warm." The children gladly availed themselves of the permission, and were soon heard hallooing outside the house, whilst their master gravely re-seated himself at his desk, and made many inquiries of Bill concerning names and places, taking notes the while with statesman-like precision. Having obtained the necessary information, he begged Bill to sit down behind the desk, or rather at the back of it, and to keep as still as possible. Bill sat bolt upright, with

his eyes fixed on the opposite wall, his hands upon his knees, and his mouth just ajar,—the very personification of quiet,—not repose. The poet, on the contrary, sat "with eyes upraised as one inspired;" for with his chin resting upon his hand, and his spectacles turned towards the ceiling, he ruminated upon the most striking and forcible way of composing a bidding letter.

After having pricked his hand a sufficient number of times, by rubbing it against a long stiff beard, wiped his spectacles, mended his pen, and consulted some manuscript papers that he took from his desk, the poet began to write. Poor Bill must have been sadly fatigued, for he did not venture to move, save and except when a little fine dust fell upon him from the desk, and obliged him, to his infinite horror, to sneeze. And he had to sit a long time upon that hard form, with his back against that upright desk, longer than he had imagined so learned a man could have taken to write a letter, even though it was a bidding letter. First there was the rough copy to be written and corrected, in Welsh, and then it was to be fairly transcribed. After this there was a translation to be made from the original into English, and here the author was obliged to have recourse to a well-thumbed dictionary; then again the rough copy of the translation was also to be transcribed. Bill need not have wondered that all these copies and transcripts took time, and that it was just two o'clock before the poet presented him with two neatly folded sheets of paper; nay, he would not have wondered

had he been an author himself; but he was no author, he thanked his stars, so he did wonder after all. But what he wondered at more than any thing else was, that "the poet of whom every body was afraid" should be but a man. He had expected him to have horns, or a tail at least, or such dreadful eyes as would nearly frighten a poor soul to death to look at them; whereas he saw nothing but unusually large spectacles placed upon a long nose, and belonging to a person of rather peculiar aspect, who pocketed his two shillings — and a hard-earned two shillings they were — with great good-humour and seeming satisfaction. "Why are people so afraid of him, I wonder?" asked Bill of that inner man to whom we talk when we talk to ourselves; but the inner man could not answer him — the truth of the matter lay too deep for Bill to fathom it.

Our poet was a bit of a satirist, and wrote such clever songs about his neighbours and their peculiarities, that they were all afraid to come near him, and so he acquired the reputation of an ogre, or a genie, or a bugbear, or — or — a poet. But to give my readers an idea of the genius that "blushed unseen" in that mountain district, I need only copy verbatim the English letter that Bill carried joyfully away with him. It was as follows*: —

November 3d, 1842.

"Being betrothed to each other, we design to ratify the plighted vow by entering under the sanc-

* The original of this letter is now in the possession of the Author.

tion of wedlock; and as a prevalent custom exists from time immemorial amongst* *Plant y Cymry* of making a bidding on the occurrence of a homogeneal occasion, we have a tendency to the manners of the *oulden tyme*, and incited by friends as well as relations to do the same, avail ourselves of this suitableness of circumstance of humbly inviting your agreeable and pleasing presence on Thursday the 29th of December next, at Mr. Shenkin's, in the parish of Llangathen, and whatever your propensities then feel to grant will meet with an acceptance of the most grateful, with an acknowledgment of the most warmly, carefully registered, and retaliated with promptitude and alacrity, whenever an occurrence of a similar nature presents itself, by

"Your most obedient servants,

"WILLIAM HOWELLS,

"SARAH LEWIS.

*** "The young man, with his father and mother (David and Ann Howells), his brother (John Howells), and his cousin (Edward Howells), desire that all claims of the above nature due to them be returned to the young man on the above day, and will feel grateful for the bestowments of all kindness conferred upon him.

"The young woman, with her father and mother (Thomas and Letice Lewis), her sisters (Elizabeth and Margaret Lewis), and her cousins (William and

* Children of Wales.

Mary Morgan), desire that all claims of the above nature due to them be returned to the young woman on the above day, and will feel grateful for the bestowments of all kindness conferred upon her."

By means of this letter and Rachel's *friends*, as auxiliaries, Sally had no doubt that she should make a capital bidding, and be able to furnish the very small dwelling Bill had taken, with chairs, tables, a bedstead, bed, and, above all, a dresser whereon to place the crockery-ware. A considerable number of copies were, therefore, printed both in Welsh and English, and distributed far and near. Their effect was, as may be imagined, generally striking, and it was universally declared that William Howells' and Sarah Lewis's bidding letter was the cleverest thing of its kind upon record.

About a week previous to the day fixed upon for the wedding, Pally and William came to Grongar. Rachel wondered much what could have induced her old friend Pally to make such a journey, but Pally assured her, it was all for her sake, and told her she came to arrange concerning her future abode. Rachel begged her to act according to her own judgment. This was precisely what Pally desired, "but then," she said, "I must have *all* your staffell, that I may get every thing ready for you, for I wo'n't do the thing by halves." This request was readily granted, and Rachel's set of china, and such other articles as she had collected at Grongar, were carefully conveyed to a little donkey-cart, which Pally

had borrowed for the occasion. Pally told Rachel not to be "timid about them, for 'twas William's interest now, to see that the donkey didn't stumble, and he would be sure to be careful."

The eve of the eventful day at length arrived. What bustle there was at Grongar! What making of bread and cakes! What talking, scolding, laughing, and joking! Mrs. Shenkin was almost beside herself with her numerous avocations, for Bill and Sally had made their escape together, and as to Rachel, she was worse than nobody. She would have put the bread into the tin-shape instead of the cake, and the currants into the bread, but for Mrs. Shenkin; or have done any other piece of mischief. Mrs. Shenkin was here, there, and everywhere—Tom was general messenger — Betty Harris *aide de cuisine*, and little Tommy in every body's way.

No sleep for Rachel or Sally that night! Oh! how Rachel wished Sally's tongue tied to her teeth, or tc any other available portion of her mouth, instead of running over and over again the road it had been traversing the last month. Hat, gown, cap, white gloves, white ribbons. White ribbons, white gloves, cap, gown, hat. She had rung and still rang the changes upon these subjects till Rachel was obliged to tell her to hold her tongue; but her words were of no avail. "There now, how cross you are, Rachel. Sure you don't want to go to sleep! Who ever thought of such a thing just before they were married. Don't you think the bows on the crown of my cap very pretty? I wonder you didn't put some

on yours. Yours is so plain with nothing but broad white strings—to be sure the lace edging is very handsome, and you look very well in it; but the bows are the making of the cap to my mind." Rachel feigned sleep, and Sally was at last silent.

Long before daylight the whole household were astir. Even little Tommy could not sleep — he must get up to put on his new frock for 'Achel's' wedding. From nine to ten o'clock the guests were assembling. There appeared to be no end to them. Parlour and kitchen were filled, and Mrs. Shenkin looked complacently around her. But what was her complacency compared with Bill's, who was inwardly reckoning up the half-crowns and shillings that each individual was likely to contribute, and counting upon who would lend, and who give. Bill was a bit of a philosopher, and thought he might as well combine amusement and improvement, during the anxious moments of expectation, by an effort at calculation. He remembered, too, that there was a considerable quantity of ale, tea, coffee, and sugar to pay for, and that the money must be subtracted from the collection made at the bidding, for Mr. and Mrs. Shenkin's treat consisted in the eatables.

At about ten o'clock the party sat down to breakfast. As there were between seventy and eighty persons present, I am, perhaps, wrong, in saying that they *sat* down, for seats failed, and many were obliged to stand. The most conspicuous pair are Mr. and Mrs. Shenkin, who are doing the honours, the one at the top, and the other at the bottom of a

long table, upon which reek tea and coffee, beverages poured forth from large tea-kettles, and drunk with evident satisfaction, by a considerable portion of the assembly. Some of the gentlemen, however, do not approve of this effeminate drink, but apply themselves with vigour to tankards of ale, which pass from mouth to mouth with business-like despatch. Toast and butter and bread and butter are distributed to the ladies — bread and cheese to the gentlemen. At Mrs. Shenkin's right hand sits William, who endeavours to cover his awkward modesty, and conceal his restless feelings by helping every one to more than they can possibly devour. Bill is similarly engaged at the bottom of the table, and supports Mr. Shenkin. He, however, unlike his fellow bridegroom, eats and drinks like the rest; cracks a joke with one — returns the banter of another — and does *not* forget the pounds, shillings, and pence; for in an occasional aside to his master, he mutters conjectures upon the probable effects of his bidding. Bolt upright on the left of Mrs. Shenkin sits the Corporal, and many a smart saying, and grand word does he pour into the ear of that edified lady, who is heard to declare, that "Rachel's father-in-law is an uncommon well-spoken man, and very handsome and civil too." Mrs. Corporal is likewise present, together with several other old friends, amongst whom Pally shines in her glory. Rachel's uncle smiles good humouredly upon William, when he upsets a cup of coffee, whilst several of her cousins look bashful amongst so many strangers.

The voices swell — the conversation mingles — as each of the excited eighty finds something to burst the barriers of his breast. Mrs. Shenkin can scarcely obtain a hearing, as she inquires first of one, and then of another, whether "the tea is agreeable, or the coffee sweet enough; or the ale to the general liking." But Mr. Shenkin's vigorous treble penetrates all ears, begging the guests to "eat hearty," his favourite recommendation when his heart is at ease. It is a merry scene, and all are happy if we may judge from the peals of laughter that echo round the old kitchen. A bright fire blazes upon the hearth, and the house is a bower of evergreens. Holly and ivy cover the walls — every brass candlestick on the mantel-piece bears its "bunch of Christmas"— every old picture is garnished by it — the very bacon-rafter over-head groans with leafy ornaments; whilst a huge jug, full of every attainable green thing, graces the table. And what a bunch of mistletoe hangs from the beam in the middle of the room! The Druids would have envied it. Why do the young men smile knowingly, and the maidens giggle as they look at it — and why does many a youth show a sprig of this ancient plant to his fair neighbour, with a sly glance of the eye? Time will show, but eleven o'clock is now warning the company that breakfast *ought* to be concluded, and that the wedding hour draws near.

There is a scuffle in the passage — a small sound of suppressed laughter is heard. Up jumps Mr. Shenkin — opens the door — disappears a moment —

appears again, leading by the hand the blushing Rachel. Up jumps William, and sits down again, blushing almost as deeply as Rachel. Following Mr. Shenkin and Rachel, proceed Sally and Miss Corporal, with half a dozen bridesmaids. Up jumps the gallant Corporal, takes his daughter's place by the side of Sally, and leads her forward. She seems determined, like her future spouse, to laugh and talk away her shame and confusion; in other words, "to grin and bear it." Still a deeper vermillion glows upon her ever red face, whilst an uneasy twinkle in her sly grey eye proves she is not quite as unembarrassed as she would seem to be. As to Rachel, she does not dare to raise her eyes from the ground. Her complexion varies with her breath, and one seems to hear her heart beat. That broad-brimmed, high-crowned, shining hat, conceals none of her beauty, but gives character to her face; whilst the full border of her lace cap, with its broad white satin strings, displays to advantage the pure hues of her delicate face. A white shawl, pinned over a new Welsh flannel skirt and petticoat, white gloves, and a white satin bridal favour, complete her simple but characteristic costume. Every one present looks at her with admiration, and William with deep delight.

But the bridal procession forms. First Mr. Shenkin and Rachel, then the Corporal and Sally; next William and his sister, followed by Bill and one of Sally's bridesmaids: the other bridesmen and maids continue the procession, whilst the party of bidding-guests conclude it. They walk over the hard, frost-

bitten snow, until they reach the little church of Llangathen, the bells of which have been merrily ringing all the morning. The clergyman waits at the altar, and William and Rachel stand on either side of it. William's "I will," is audibly pronounced, and Rachel's voice tremulously repeats the words. Their hands are joined — the ring is placed upon the finger — the vows are plighted, and the newly-wedded pair kneel down. Solemnly the clergyman addresses them, and attentively they listen, and pray for the blessing of God upon their union. They rise from their knees, and the other couple approach. They are, in their turn, made man and wife, and Sally is now *sure* that she is married. I *believe* William has imprinted a kiss upon Rachel's cheek. I am sure Mr. Shenkin has availed himself of his privilege of father, and has given her a hearty paternal embrace. William and Bill lead their brides from the church — the rest of the party follow — the bells speak out again, and all return to Grongar. They are received by Mrs. Shenkin, who has been "on hospitable thoughts intent" during the ceremony: and to Sally's infinite delight, are joined by a re-inforcement of Mr. Shenkin's friends, who, she hopes, will all *give* and not *lend.*

Now comes the bidding. At the top of the parlour table stands Sally, holding a large pewter plate; by her side sits Mr. Shenkin, with pen, ink, and paper before him. The corporal flourishes a tankard of hot ale, spiced, and full of biscuits, whilst one of the bridesmaids displays a plate filled with sprigs of

rosemary. The corporal is honoured by the appellation of "tailor," alias bridesman for the day, and seems well satisfied with the part he has to perform. Bill grins by the side of Sally, and watches all that goes on with keen and penetrating eyes. First enters the great Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, and drops five shillings into the plate, begging to say it is a gift. Mr. Shenkin writes upon the large sheet of foolscap, "Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, five shillings, a gift." The corporal presents his tankard, which Mr. Thomas, Glanmere, nothing loth, receives, and does not return it, until he has proved, by his deeds, even better than by his heartfelt words, the excellence of the beverage that it contains. The bridesmaid offers a piece of rosemary as a receipt for the money, and Mr. Thomas retires, after having received the thanks of Bill and Sally, as well as of the latter's parents, who politely conduct him to the kitchen, and hope he will not leave until after tea. Mr. James, Llandewy, and other of Mr. Shenkin's friends, out of compliment to him, give, some three shillings, some two-and-sixpence, and receive the ale and rosemary in return.

The *grandees* having disappeared, enter "Davvy Davvies." Five shillings—a loan. The Receiver takes the money; the Recorder writes, "Davvy Davvies, five shillings, a loan." Martha Howells, two shillings and sixpence, in payment of a loan made by Sally to her at her bidding. Lucy Lewis, one shilling, a gift. Tom Jones (Bill's farm companion), five shillings, a gift. Betsey Thomas, half-

a-sovereign, a loan. The half sovereign is placed conspicuously upon the edge of the pewter plate, and a particularly nice piece of rosemary given in return.

"Ha, ha," says the corporal, "a smart husband for you, Miss. What a pretty, straight sprig you've got — he'll be a well-made young fellow, I'm sure: no wonder you didn't drink the ale."

One after another, the guests enter the parlour. There are nearly a hundred persons, and each contributes something. Some give, some lend; others repay bidding debts contracted by them to Sally or Bill; others, again, repay money lent on similar occasions to the relations mentioned in the bidding-letters, — Bill and Sally's mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and cousins. Crowns, half-crowns, shillings, and sixpences fill the bottom of the plate, whilst one or two sovereigns, and several half sovereigns, glitter around its edge. By degrees the parlour is filled, for the young people linger to hear the corporal's jokes upon the sprigs of rosemary they receive, and which are supposed to be portentous of the shape and size of their future husbands or wives.

"Dear me! what a little, crooked bit you've given me," says one fair damsel, rather pettishly.

"Oh! never mind, my dear; little people are as good as big, sometimes, though they don't make fine soldiers," consoles the corporal. "Yours will be tall as a Maypole," he continues, addressing himself to a diminutive youth, who looks inquiringly at the

bridesmaid, who has presented him with a very long, thin sprig: — "and as for yours! why, bless my heart, if she wo'n't be short and fat as a barrel," he adds, as a thick bushy sprig enters the hand of a dissatisfied-looking young man, of lank and gawky air.

These, and similar pleasantries, out of which the party draw immoderate mirth, proceed, whilst Mr. Shenkin indefatigably records the name of each contributor, and the sums given, lent, or repaid. William and Rachel, having dropped each half-a-crown as gifts into the well-filled plate, impatiently wait the conclusion of the bidding to take their departure. Bill stands gazing like one enchanted upon the plate, and at every *gift* that enters it, Sally's eyes meet his with an expressive twinkle of delight. Sally receives the compliments and banterings of her friends with a disembarassed air, returns jest for jest with laudable spirit, and looks as sly and amusing as she could look. At last every one has advanced to and receded from the pewter-plate now placed upon the table, and the two brides and bridegrooms, bridesmaid, tailor, and recorder, are alone left in the parlour. Mr. Shenkin counts up the money, and with hands uplifted in astonishment, declares the sum to be no less than thirty pounds. Thirty pounds for two farm servants! Never was there such good luck in the annals of biddings! Sally carefully puts the gold and silver into a yellow canvas bag, prepared for the occasion, saying as she does so, that "they'll have a house as good as their neighbours, and perhaps better."

William and Rachel now begin to think of leaving. The friends who are to accompany them come forward from amongst the crowd. Now begin the kissing, shaking of hands, and kind wishes. Mr. Shenkin, with real tears in his eyes, once more embraces Rachel, and says, "Don't be jealous, William; 'tis the second and last time: but I'm sorry from my heart to part with her." Mrs. Shenkin wishes her every happiness. Sally wo'n't say good-by, because she means to go and see her soon: little Tommy puts his arms about her neck, and says she shall not go away from him. Tom, Bill, and the rest, shake her warmly by the hand: whilst Rachel, to her surprise, feels sorrow and regret at leaving Grongar.

A song and a dance without, announce Mad Moll. She meets the party as they quit the house, displaying a bunch of white ribbon that she has snatched from some member of the wedding. She capers round Rachel with much glee, until the appearance of Sally with a cup of hot ale arrests her, and she lets them pass on. Stooping down, and taking off the remnant of a shoe, she throws it after them, crying out, "There's for luck, Miss Jones! I shall come and see you:" and then sitting down upon the horse-block by the door, she begins to drink ale, and eat bread and cheese, with great delight.

We will let Rachel and her party gain the bottom of the hill, whilst we hastily conclude Sally's bidding. No one who left Grongar that night could cast a slur on its hospitality. Oatmeal-cakes, cheese and ale, followed the collection, after which came tea

and coffee again. Dancing, singing, the mistletoe, and Christmas gambols of all kinds, followed. Mrs. Shenkin was very amiable, and made an agreeable impression on the minds of those who had never before been agreeably impressed in her favour. Mr. Shenkin was convivial, and played the host with becoming dignity. It was late, or rather *early*, when they separated; and to judge by the merriment and fun — the alternate screams and laughter under "the mistletoe bough," — and the universal good humour that prevailed, Bill and Sally were not the only persons who were pleased with the bidding at Grongar.

No. XVII.

CONCLUSION.

We left William and Rachel, with their bridal party, descending the hill that leads from Grongar to Llangathen. They are a joyous set, and their merry laugh and ringing voices are heard far through the frosty air. It is one of those winter days that every one, blessed with good health and animal spirits, delights in. Snow covers the hills and valleys; but it is snow frozen hard as the ground beneath it. The sun is shining brightly, warming the body and exhilarating the mind by his welcome beams. His footsteps are upon the mountains, his smiles upon the plains, and there is not a portion of the white world through which our party passes that does not glitter beneath his rays. The hedge-rows have taken off their green leafy ornaments, and have hung jewels in their places. The long icicles are pendent from every spray, and sparkle like diamonds, as the sun shines upon them. The exquisitely fine web of the untiring spider is strung with small beads that display distinctly its curious and geometrical shape — wheel within wheel — circle within circle — of sparkling threads. The streams have been checked in their course from their mountain homes, and instead of

flowing broadly and smoothly onwards, work their way with elaborate impetuosity out of their icy chains.

But merrily trip on the wedding folk. Loudly resound the feet of the horse that carries old Pally and Nanny the corporal. He has been well roughed; but what roughing can secure him on such a slippery road? It is cruel to laugh, but laugh they will at every stumble the old horse makes.

"Ge up, Taff!" exclaims Nanny, pulling up the bridle with might and main. "Don't you see you're just throwing Pal off, you old thing you!"

"There now, Nanny," cries Pally, "do ee take care. Corporal! corporal! heigh there! Come you here and lead the horse over the ice, or we shall never get on."

Off runs the gallant corporal, who has hitherto been escorting another lady, but alas! he presently tumbles flat upon his face. "Ha, ha, ha!" laugh out the party, and the echoes, as merry as they, laugh again.

"Laugh if you will," returns the corporal, springing up and brushing the white evidence from his clothes. "I'll return the compliment by and by."

On he runs, and guides Taff and his double burden safely across the ice, not quitting his rein till they have reached a path beaten in the snow, but then returning to the young folks. *Unluckily* in his haste he brushes roughly past the most hearty laugher of the set, trips him up, and laughs in his turn. Every one joins, the youth seated in the snow not less loudly

than the rest, until, "picking himself up," he shakes his fist good-naturedly at the mischievous corporal, and declares that "he is ashamed to see an old man serving people such tricks."

One damsel slips, and her attendant beau clasps her up. The corporal vows that the ladies make intentional false steps, and when another says that "she shall never get on," he votes that she be forthwith rough-shod or carried. His mirth, which he passes for wit, is as unfailing as the laughter of his companions, which especially pursues Nanny and Pally as they trot on in advance. The sounds travel through the frosty air, and reach the old couple when they are half a mile before the rest, causing them to fear they are making no progress, they being anxious to arrive at the new house as soon as possible. The scarlet cloaks which the women have thrown over their wedding-dresses, contrast brightly with the snow — I *might* carry the contrast further, and say with red cheeks and red noses; but that would be personal.

William and Rachel have managed to hang behind the rest of the party, the true order of the bridal procession having been of necessity broken in their progress over the snow. Rachel looks serious, but happy, and William supremely blest. She has shown him the sixpence that he won, and gave her on the night of Pally's "All Hallow Eve" party, and has told him that she has worn it ever since. But they do not speak much — their feelings are too deep for words, for who can give utterance to thought when

the heart overflows with happiness? William looks into Rachel's gentle eyes, and upon her blushing cheek, and reads his future domestic peace, whilst she thinks upon his steadiness and worth, and feels secure of his lasting affection.

The party in advance suddenly come to a halt at the bridge that Rachel found so much difficulty in crossing when her father, William, and herself reached it two years ago. The ricketty plank is now rendered dangerous by the sheet of ice that has encrusted it, and the stream that then ran across the road is now subdued by large masses of ice, preparing to close over it. How are the people to pass? They are at a stand still. The bridge is out of the question — the ice is hardly formed in the centre of the current — and the stepping-stones are more slippery than the plank. The ever-alert corporal sets his wits to work to devise the ways and means of crossing the ford, and urges that the ladies must be carried *vi et armis;* but they resist — womanfully resist — the proposal.

"Nonsense!" cries the corporal. "Come you, Mary Vach — I'm an old man, so you needn't be squeamish." And he forthwith raises a plump daughter of Wales from the ground, who, before she knows what he is about, finds herself on the opposite side. William follows his father's example, and bears Rachel across. He was about to say, "Do you remember this bridge, Rachel?" but a shadow crosses her brow, checks him, and assures him that she remembers it but too well. Oh! what entreaties and

refusals — what laughs and reproaches are heard, and what expedients are resorted to, before the womankind are all on the other side of the brook. The corporal does the greater part of the porter's work, since the bashful are brought to submit to be carried by him, though they refuse the offers of the more youthful swains, by whom they would have been transported with joy.

When they are all safely landed, on they go through the half-beaten lanes, passing here and there a snow-covered cottage, whence issue men, women, and children, to gaze after the bridal party. Now, a set of boys stay their sliding upon the frozen pond, to shout and throw snow-balls after them, and now some old friend peeps forth from her cabin to bid them "God speed." They track the old horse Taff as they proceed, and calculate upon the number of slips he has made, by remarking the length of his footsteps upon the snow. "Pally was just off here," says one. "It was a near miss that Nanny wasn't over Taff's head here," cries another. "A good chance for a second wife, corporal," says a third. "A miss is as good as a mile," retorts the corporal; "and if Nan holds by me as strong as she holds by Taff, I may wait a long time for my second."

The good old oaks of Dynevor appear once more, and the turrets of the castle covered with snow, show themselves from amid the bare wood in the distance. The hearts of William and Rachel beat with anticipation.

"Where can the house be?" asks Rachel, looking

about her as she walks in search of some dwelling she has never seen before.

"Not yet, dear — not yet," replies William, as they pass the shepherd's house, and descend the broad path leading into the high road.

It was growing dusk, being past four o'clock. William was devising the means of avoiding Rachel's old home, the sight of which he feared would revive old scenes. The party were still far before, and out of sight. "We will play them a trick, Rachel," said William, "and go the short way, and then you can see our house before they come — it will be so much pleasanter." Rachel hesitated. "She did not know — perhaps — but ——" But William drew her on in an opposite direction, and by the short cut they went.

Half a mile's walk brought them into a lane that Rachel knew well — a lane famous in spring for a superabundance of primroses, wood-anemonies, and hawthorn, and in which she used to fill her pinafore with flowers when a child. "Oh!" she exclaimed, with almost infantine delight: "is it here? How I should like to live here! Do you remember the blackberries you used to gather for me — and the branches of wild cherry from the tree at the end — and the dog-roses, and the hawthorn? Oh, William! this is the prettiest lane in the world, and so out of the way of every body. Can it be here? just only tell me that — is it here?" William smiled, but did not answer. "There is a roof," continued Rachel: "no — only a branch of an old oak covered with

snow. Yes, it *is* a roof; and there was never a house here before. This is it, William — I am sure this is it: there is the smoke. Oh! we shall never come to the turning in the lane."

A few steps brought them to the turning, and the house was really before them. Nothing looks to advantage in winter, still Rachel thought she had never seen any thing so pretty as her new abode. She could have stood long to gaze upon the pointed windows in the roof — the neat little wooden porch over the door — the palings that surrounded the garden — the flower-beds, the shapes of which she distinguished through the snow, and upon a hundred other interesting objects; but William wished to introduce her to the interior before their friends arrived, so he tapped at the door. Down came Pally and Nanny, who, thanks to Taff's jog-trot, had been there half an hour: they welcomed William and Rachel, and then considerately left the young couple to themselves.

Rachel looked first around her in delighted astonishment, and then at William with grateful affection. A bright fire blazed in the grate, casting its cheerful glow over the warm, snug room. Upon a new painted deal table in the midst was laid out all the china tea-set, whilst the hot buttered cakes smoked before the fire. There were eight new oak chairs of William's making — there was a good eight-day clock — and there was — oh, pleasant surprise! — there was a corner cupboard — a glass corner cupboard. Rachel was to possess this crowning treasure of a good house-

wife; and it was filled with valuables. William opened wide the glass doors, and displayed, first, an empty shelf where the China had been; then a second shelf, filled with glass and very choice cups and jugs; and then a third, containing odd China plates, cups, and saucers, egg-cups, and various ornaments. It was of all corner cupboards the smartest. There were stained eggs in the egg-cups, and spoons arranged crossways in the wine glasses: there were peacocks' feathers hanging gracefully here and there, and China sheep and dogs beneath them: there was, in short, every thing that Rachel could desire. There were, besides, shining brass candlesticks and other brass articles on the chimney-piece, and several smart pictures round the room. The history of the Prodigal Son — that series of paintings which Rachel used to gaze upon every day with untiring satisfaction — was amongst them. But this was not all. The book-shelves were painted afresh, and Rachel's books arranged upon them; the well-known rose tree flourished in leafless but strong health in a green pot on the window-seat, whilst just above it the bull-finch was giving his last chirp as he settled himself to rest upon his perch in a new cage. Stretched before the fire in all the luxury of extreme warmth and idleness, lay the tortoise-shell cat; and last, though not least, in the best corner by the fire-place, stood poor old Jackey's arm-chair.

It was here, after surveying all the furniture of her neat, comfortable parlour, that Rachel paused, and that the tears, which had been struggling in her eyes,

would burst forth. She sunk down into the chair, and said, "Oh, William! if my father were here, how thankful he would be! Do not think me unkind, but I cannot help these tears; they are tears of happiness and gratitude. I only feel that no one would rejoice in our welfare as he would have done, my dear, dear father."

Rachel smiled through her tears as she looked into William's face, and put her hand in his, and he thought he had never loved her so much before. He imprinted a kiss upon her cheek, and bade her come and examine all her presents. "Look, dear," he said, "these two cut glasses are Pally's gift; the two table spoons and six tea-spoons my father's: mother bought the large China plates, and sister the cup on the table, with the Christmas in it. Even little Mary spent her only fourpenny piece last fair, in bringing you that China man, and every one has given you something, as you will see when you come into the other room."

They went into a tidy back kitchen, where were her father's old dresser, chairs, and tables, looking like new by dint of Pally's rubbing, and William's mending and painting. Upon the dresser was displayed all the common *crockery-ware;* and William pointed out a dish as the gift of one friend, a jug or cup as that of another, until Rachel thought herself the most fortunate of brides. There was a sound of voices at the end of the lane. "Oh come, Rachel," cried William: "you must see one thing more; never mind the cold, dear, but come quickly."

He led her through a little back door, to a shed,

where, roosting warmly and snugly upon a pole underneath the thatch, she spied her old friends, chanticleer and his two wives, together with some half-dozen fat, feathered children. The cock mistook the candle for the first streak of dawn, and gave a very sleepy crow in token of welcome, but did not succeed in awaking himself. The hens half withdrew their heads from beneath their wings, but soon comfortably replaced them; and Rachel, with a smile, begged William, who would fain have aroused the whole party, to let them sleep in peace. The grunt of a pig reached her ear, but the footsteps and voices drew near, and they returned to the parlour.

Down came Pally and Nanny, who had been gossipping up stairs, to see that the tea-kettle was boiling and all things ready. The door opened, and the Corporal made his appearance. "A pretty couple!" he began: "that's you, Rachel, is it; leading us such a dance. Here have we been looking behind and before, and left and right, till it got too dark to look any longer, and we thought the goblins had run away with you. If it had been Sally now, that had played us such a trick, I shouldn't so much have wondered, but you—such a sober, well-behaved girl—I am quite astonished!"

Rachel looked, half-frightened, into her father-in-law's face, thinking he was displeased; but a sly glance from the corner of his eye re-assured her, whilst a hearty smack upon her cheek told her that the Corporal was indulging a good-natured jest at her expense. Then began the clatter of the tea-things,

and the ladies were invited up-stairs to take off their hats and cloaks. All officiously assisted in disrobing and adorning Rachel, after which they looked about them at the pretty dimity bed-curtains, an almost unheard of luxury, and the rest of the furniture.

"Bless me!" cried one of the young ladies, "what a beautiful looking glass! If it isn't my very self!"

"Yes," said Miss Corporal, "William bought it new. I wish I had one like it, I know that. Just come and look at yourself, Betto."

The old maid, alluded to heretofore, smirked and smiled, adjusted the borders of her cap, and smoothed her hair before the new looking-glass, whilst she thought of her dear widower. The other young damsels followed her example, saying, as they gave a satisfied look at themselves, that they had never before seen so handsome a glass. One discovered that her eyes were bluer than she supposed them to be; another, that her cheeks were becomingly rosy; a third, that her teeth were decidedly the whitest in the room, whilst all were elbowing one another out of the way, to obtain a peep at their beloved physiognomies.

"Well, girls, well!" screamed Pally, from the foot of the stairs, "when will you a' done? The tea's getting cold, and the Corporal vows he'll begin without you."

Down tumbled the maidens, laughing and blushing, and feeling proudly conscious of good looks.

Rachel performed her first matron tea-making with becoming modesty, though she was frequently on the point of following the example set her by William in

the morning, of pouring the tea into the sugar basin, and the cream into the tea-pot. William, seated by her side to hand the water and the cakes, was the life of the party. Ever good-natured and polite, happiness, on that day, made him trebly so, and he sought to make every one present partake of the warm glow of contentment that he felt himself. Betto and her widower, and many youths and maidens, made themselves happy in their different ways; even Nanny the Corporal looked good tempered. Pally was in her glory, and had stories of Biddings to no end to relate, in which the footman from the house supported and offended her, by turns, with his tales of English brides and bridegrooms. As to the Corporal, his jokes were inexhaustible; and since every body laughed at them, and nobody criticised the propriety of their application, he thought himself the wittiest man in the world.

We could not, perhaps, take leave of these simple folk at a pleasanter place or period, than at the new house, and upon the wedding-day — still, like a true gossip, I feel an inclination to lengthen out my tale. I should like — but observe, I restrain myself, and do not give way to my inclinations — I should like, I say, to skip over some five or six months, and, taking my reader with me this lovely May evening, to peep in upon Rachel at the aforementioned new house. But it must not be, though I can just fancy how we should find her — probably sitting under her pretty porch sewing, or else fastening the creepers that are beginning to grow against the walls. William would

either be by her side helping her, or working in the garden at no great distance. I know we should find every thing, to use a favourite expression of Pally's, as neat as a new pin; and as pretty—what comparison can I make?—why as pretty as Rachel herself. There are flowers covering the green hedgerows and banks of the lane—the wild cherry is in full white blossom—the oaks are beginning to put on their yellowish spring garb—the stream—for there is no pretty nook hereabouts without its stream—is sparkling clearly and brightly along: hundreds of birds are singing their full-fledged young ones to sleep, and the glorious setting sun is casting a bright red glow over the whole picture. How I wish, after all, that we had peeped in upon Rachel! Perhaps we should have found the Corporal with his pipe, or Pally with her knitting, taking their evening walk to see the young couple, whom every body loves more and more; or may be we should have stumbled, it being market day, upon Mr. Shenkin and the grey mare, for he is sure to go out of his way to pay his favourite Rachel a visit.

But I am afraid you will say that what with my "probablys" and "perhapses" and "maybes," I have made a strangely sudden jump from winter to spring. My excuse must be, that I am writing this, my last sketch, in spring, and that I have such an affection for Rachel myself, as to suppose every one who has any knowledge of her would rejoice in her happiness. Indeed, my love for her has led me far astray from the rules I laid down for myself when I began

these sketches. Instead of druidical remains, old heroes, and old castles, I find myself engaged with the men and women of to-day, and know not how to quit a girl to whom I have taken a fancy. I have sadly changed my purpose, but I fear I have gone too far with my reader's patience to resume my forsaken themes. I will, therefore, take my leave, hoping you will treat me as kindly as you can, and believe that, though I have not described this lovely valley, with its river, its brooks, its meadows, its glens, its woods, its old romantic towers, its cheerful villages and hamlets, and, above all, its inhabitants, as they deserve, I have failed only because I wanted the skill; for a love for the beautiful, though it may prompt us to attempt to convey it to others, will not always impart the graphic power.

THE END.

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